



NAVY NEWS

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BRAVE MEN WITH BRAVE HEARTS

The Royal Marines have surged against their Taliban opponents in Afghanistan, battering enemy strongholds and forcing them to flee. But not without a heavy toll.

See pages 21-24.

Picture: LA(Phot) Gaz Faulkner

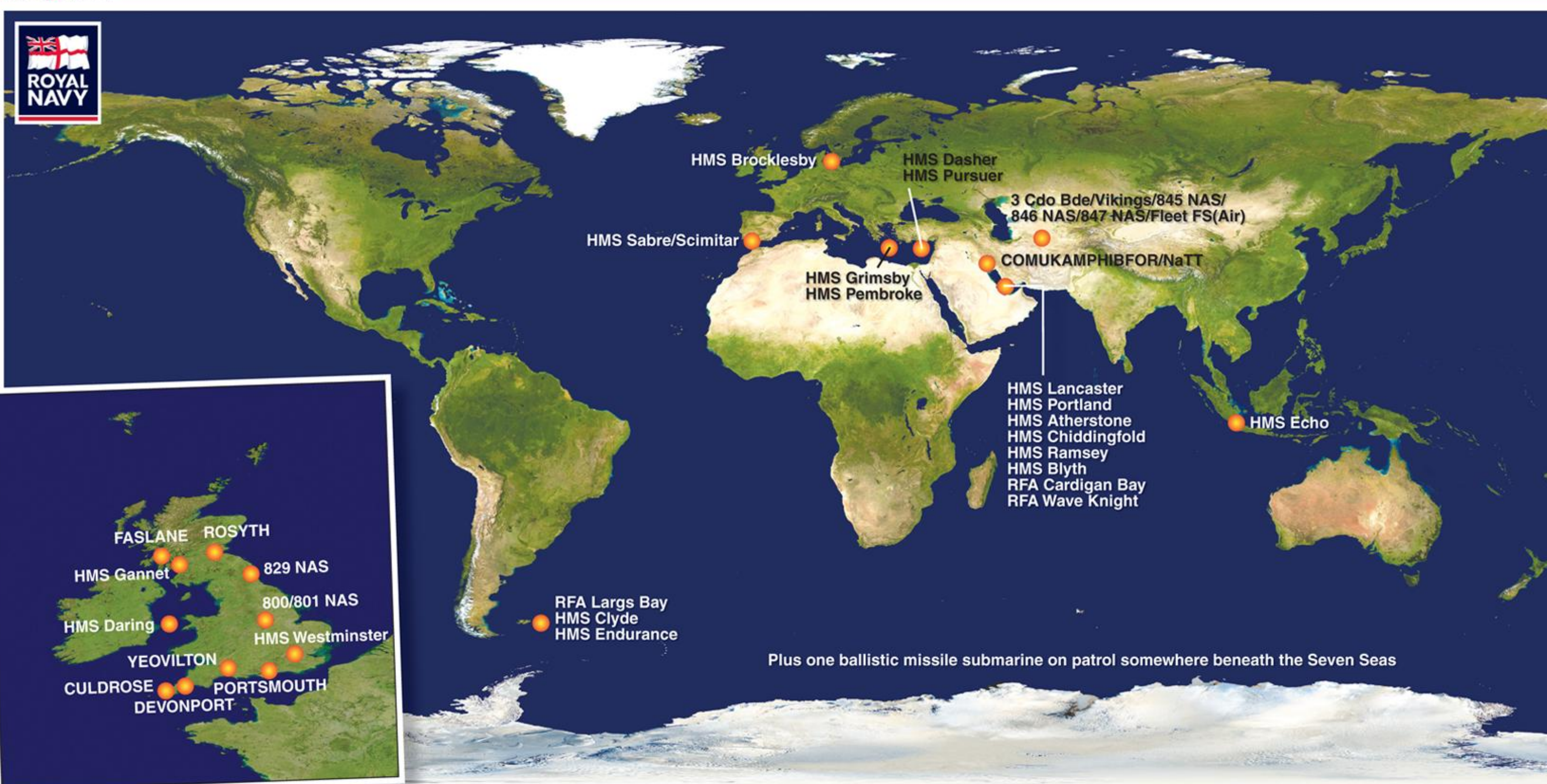
**PHALANX SHIELD
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**FUTURE FIGHTER
TEST PILOT OPENS UP
ABOUT JSF**



ARK ROYAL IV CUTAWAY





Fleet Focus

FEBRUARY 2009 finds the men and women of the Senior Service concentrated east of Suez, either in Iraq, the Gulf, or Afghanistan.

The latter country has been the scene of two intensive operations led by **3 Commando Brigade**: a concerted sweep around Lashkar Gah and a series of raids into Taleban compounds near Kandahar. Both operations (see pages 21-23) dealt the foe a significant blow; both, sadly, were not without their casualties (see page 24).

The brigade is not the only Royal Marines unit in charge of ground operations in the Middle East. The staff of **Commander UK Amphibious Force** are directing peacekeeping efforts in Basra (see page 11).

Further south, **HMS Lancaster** remains on watch around Iraq's oil platforms (see page 5), although she's about to hand over to **HMS Richmond**. Mine warfare vessels **HMS Atherstone** (see page 6), **Chiddingfold**, **Ramsey** and **Blyth** (see page 5) continue to work with the region's navies.

HMS Northumberland and **HMS Portland** are committed to the fight against piracy and illegal activities in the Indian Ocean. The former shepherded an aid ship safely into Somalia (see page 4); the latter has been patrolling in the Gulf of Aden and Horn of Africa (see pages 14-15).

A flurry of ships returned home in time for Christmas after their exertions in Southeast Asia (**HMS Kent**), North and South Atlantic (**HMS Iron Duke**) and the Indian Ocean (**HMS Cumberland**); see page 6 for details.

North of the border, the Search and Rescue fliers of **HMS Gannet** were heavily in demand over the festive season (see right); their unit is also our Squadron of the Month (see page 12).

In need of rescuing – though far beyond Gannet's range – was **HMS Endurance**. The ice ship's engine room flooded as she sailed through the Magellan Strait. Her crew's exertions and the assistance of Chilean tugs ensured she did not founder (see page 7).

The Red Plum is currently in the Falklands, a passive observer as **RFA Largs Bay** is the centrepiece of Exercise Cape Bayonet, annual war games testing the ability of the three Forces to safeguard the islands.

One ship which knew the cost of defending the Falklands was **HMS Glasgow**; the paid-off destroyer was towed out of Portsmouth Harbour for the last time, bound for Turkey and the breaker's yard (see page 8).

Also passing the Round Tower was **HMS Brocklesby** heading for Copenhagen and a NATO task group (see right).

The ship's company of **HMS Westminister** enjoyed not one but two trips up the Thames, the first to visit their namesake city, the second to be star of the London Boat Show (see page 10).

Westminster is an infrequent sight on the Thames but a regular one in Portsmouth, where folk are slowly getting used to the sight of a Type 45 destroyer in harbour for the first time.

HMS Daring made her inaugural voyage from the Clyde to Portsmouth as we went to press (see page 3).

There are still several years before another linchpin of the future Navy enters service, the **Joint Strike Fighter**. Its chief test pilot gives us an insight into progress with the successor to the Harrier (see page 25).

Fundamental to the JSF's development has been a specially-modified Harrier, the **VAAC**. It's been carrying out crucial tests with **HMS Illustrious** to pave the way for the future fighter (see page 4).

Another old dog (well, not that old) learning new tricks is **829 NAS** whose Merlins have been used to test a new defensive aide suite (see page 9).

Wonderful destination

THE new year was just six days old when the first deployment of 2009 began: a NATO tour of duty for one of our smaller ships.

HMS Brocklesby left a very cold Solent behind bound for Copenhagen (every bit as chilly as Pompey, but snowier) to join NATO's Standing Mine Countermeasures Group for the next six months.

The force has been headed by the RN for the past month (survey ship **HMS Roebuck** put her hydrographic work on hold to serve as command ship during 2008), but now the Danes are taking charge – hence the visit to their wonderful, wonderful capital.

Mercifully given the icy weather currently engulfing much of the continent, the task group – comprising vessels from Germany, Belgium, Latvia and the Netherlands as well as the UK and Denmark – won't be spending long in the Kattegat.

It begins its mine clearance work and exercises in the Mediterranean, allowing **Brocklesby** to demonstrate the potency of **Seafox**, the ship's

new mine disposal system which is better (and cheaper) than the 'yellow submarine' it replaces.

The remote-controlled submarine can destroy underwater ordnance at depths of more than 300 metres (984ft) – something there's a good chance it will be required to do.

For after the month or so in the Med, the force shifts to the Channel, North Sea and Baltic with much of the emphasis of operations on blowing up live WW2 ordnance which still litters Europe's waters.

"It will be busy, but varied," said **Brocklesby's** CO Lt Cdr Tom Tredray.

"It's always interesting working with ships from foreign navies. I know the younger members of the ship's company are looking forward to that in particular."

They're also probably looking forward to better communications with home; the Hunt-class warship is among the first in the Fleet to receive enhanced broadband which should make surfing the internet at sea considerably faster (the web at sea is invariably very sluggish).

And it wouldn't be a story about **Brocklesby** without a mention of PO(MW) Antony 'Pinta' Beer. No specific reason. He's appeared in our last three editions and we thought you might miss his presence.

Picture: LA(Phot) Owen King, FRPU East



Gannets and turkey

WHILE much of the Navy shut down over the festive season, there was no rest for the fliers of **HMS Gannet**.

Indeed, the Prestwick-based Search and Rescue team even had their turkey interrupted by two call-outs on the big day itself (one to Leuchars, near St Andrews, the other to Lochgilphead at the tip of Loch Gilp).

The Christmas Day mercy missions were two of 11 call-outs by the Sea King Mk5 between December 24 and January 2 – with a dozen people extremely grateful for the assistance of the **Gannet** aircrew.

The busiest day of the holiday period was the penultimate day of 2008: the helicopter was airborne five times as pilots

Lt Cdr Andrew 'Tank' Murray and Stuart 'Spike' Pike, observer Lt Cdr Martin 'Florry' Ford and aircrewman PO Wayne Ashman helped those in needs.

Most of the call-outs were relatively routine – three mums-to-be needing assistance, a couple of patients requiring specialist cardiac treatment, and four people needing to be plucked from the hills around Rannoch Moor (between Perth and Fort William), the Isle of Jura and Loch Lomond.

"Thankfully with nice weather during the festive break, the rescues were all pretty straightforward," said Lt Cdr Bryan Nicholas, **Gannet's** CO.

"The good weather did bring with it plummeting temperatures – particularly on the mountains – so there was never any question of hanging around."

"As far as the duty crews are concerned, this is our job and we're always glad to be able to get a good result, but there is something a little bit special about being able to make people feel that bit safer at Christmas."

It's not all been a matter of life and death for the **Gannet** team. They brought some Christmas cheer to youngsters suffering from cancer at Malcolm Sargent House in Prestwick on December 25 as Santa dropped in in person to hand over £1,000 raised by the fliers during their spare time.

Squadron of the month, page 12

Daring sails into exciting future

THE first of the Royal Navy's new class of destroyer has left the Clyde to make her first appearance at her home port of Portsmouth.

As *Navy News* went to press, HMS Daring was making her way south after a rousing farewell from her builders.



● HMS Daring is shepherded down the River Clyde by tugs as she leaves the BVT shipyard at Scotstoun
Picture: LA(Phot) Brian Douglas

All going well with Dauntless

SO WELL have the trials of HMS Dauntless been going that the mixed RN/civilian crew managed to squeeze a little more into her programme than was planned before she headed back to Scotstoun and fitting-out.

She also became the first Type 45 to drop in at Faslane, where she hosted her sponsor Lady Burnell-Nugent.

The visit to Faslane prepared the warship for her inaugural gunnery shoot on the Benbecula ranges in the Outer Hebrides, where her 4.5in and 30mm guns were fired for the first time – another test that went better than expected, allowing all to pack up early and escape a burst of bad weather.

And lest we forget the third of class, Diamond is on the verge of tests of her own.

She's fitting out at Scotstoun, and 15 months after launch she's resembling her older sisters. Most major external features are in place – main gun, radars, aerials, missile launchers – and inside is taking shape, including a now-complete ops room.

Her one-time solitary sailor, Cdr 'Paddy' Munns, has been joined by 13 shipmates ahead of Diamond's basin trials around Easter.

The first of six Type 45s has successfully completed a punishing programme of trials – but there will be a similar regime of tests and training over the coming months before the state-of-the-art warship is ready for front-line duties.

Employees from builders BVT gathered on the quayside in Glasgow to see her off, and their cheers were answered by those of the Royal Navy sailors on board, who had become a part of the local community.

Daring's Commanding Officer, Capt Paul Bennett, said: "On behalf of Daring's crew I want to give my heartfelt thanks to the city of Glasgow for the support we have been shown since the first sailor arrived at Scotstoun in 2006.

"For some, Glasgow has been their home for almost three years, and it has been a great place to be stationed.

"The ship's company and I have been very much looking forward to the day when we would be able to take charge of Daring and begin our journey to her home port of Portsmouth, and hopefully a very successful future on this magnificent ship."

Capt Bennett, who carried out an exclusive interview for *Talking Navy News* before he sailed with his ship, said: "It is a privilege to command Daring because what we are doing is bringing a completely new capability into the Royal Navy.

"It is not just a new ship, it is the first of a new class with new capabilities, and that is the really exciting part; we have the responsibility and privilege of setting the pattern for a class of ship that will serve the Royal Navy for 30 to 40 years.

"We will set out what we do and how we do it, and much of that will still be in place in perhaps 40 years time."

Capt Bennett said that around 80 per cent of the equipment in Daring is new, and a great deal of the standard operating procedures will be written by the new ship's company from scratch.

Of the next few months for this "world-beating air defence destroyer", Capt Bennett said a busy time lay ahead.

Propulsion systems have been thoroughly tested, as have domestic and 'hotel' systems – all the fundamentals for life.

The *raison d'être* for Daring – the Principal Anti Air Missile System (PAAMS) – has been tested in terms of radars and other elements, but full trials will be carried out later this year with a view to achieving an in-service date in December.

"Being in command is fantastic in any sense, so commanding a warship is a fantastic experience and something I relish," said Capt Bennett.

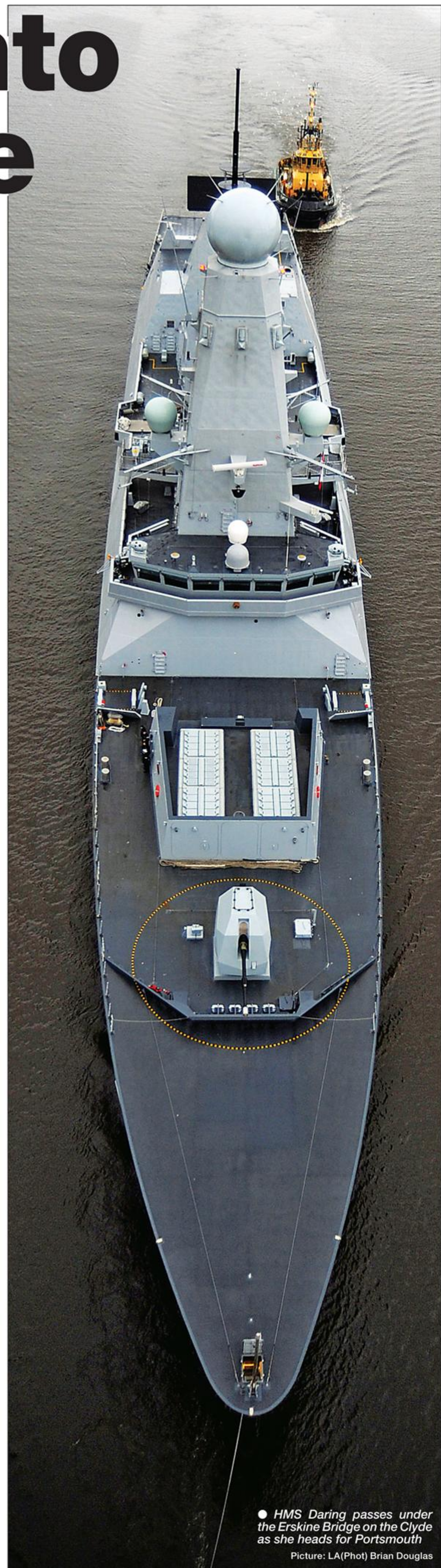
"Daring is the first element of the modern Navy, with the carriers, Astute and so on to follow. It's taking a large step forward and leading the way for follow-on ships to match.

"It's a really significant moment for defence, the Royal Navy and Portsmouth, and on that basis hugely exciting."

■ Talking Navy News – see panel p33



● The Fighting G meets a Fighting D: while on transit to Faslane Type 42 destroyer HMS Gloucester sailed past one of the Type 45 warships built to replace her, HMS Dauntless. The new destroyer was carrying out trials in the Firth of Clyde



● HMS Daring passes under the Erskine Bridge on the Clyde as she heads for Portsmouth
Picture: LA(Phot) Brian Douglas

A wealth of Taurus destinations

THE largest task group the RN is mustering in 2009 will leave UK waters this month, bound ultimately for south-east Asia.

More than 3,000 sailors and Royal Marines, upwards of a dozen British and Allied ships, and elements of half a dozen Fleet Air Arm and RAF squadrons are committed to Exercise Taurus 09.

Taurus is probably the best 'ticket' for sailors and marines looking for globe-trotting adventure this year: Malta, Greece, Turkey, India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei and Thailand are all on the task force's itinerary.

It is, of course, not a cruise in battleship grey, but a chance to test a gamut of Senior Service skills from gathering a task force and sending it half way around the world to combat exercises.

"Taurus is hugely exciting – it will allow the Royal Navy to conduct challenging training in a variety of environments, from amphibious warfare in the Med and underwater warfare in the Indian Ocean to jungle warfare in Brunei," said Cdre Peter Hudson, Commander Amphibious Task Group who will be in charge of the force aboard flagship HMS Bulwark.

"It's extremely important that we add depth and resilience to these key skills. We should see the many hundreds of sailors and marines return in August professionally fulfilled, but also having had fun achieving it."

Ships currently earmarked for Taurus (the task force surges and ebbs depending upon when and where it is) include: Bulwark, helicopter carrier Ocean, escorts Somerset and Argyll, American Arleigh Burke destroyer USS Mitscher, French frigate Duplex, amphibious support ship RFA Mounts Bay, tanker RFA Wave Ruler, floating warehouse RFA Fort Austin, plus two Trafalgar-class hunter killer submarines.

Ships from Turkey and the Netherlands are also due to join the battlegroup at times.

The green berets of 40 Commando act as the ship-to-shore 'punch', carried on to dry land either by the task group's landing craft or the aircraft of 820 NAS, Commando Helicopter Force, and RAF Chinooks. Bagger Sea Kings of 857 NAS and Lynx of 847 NAS will serve as Taurus' eyes in the sky.

After 'warming up' (literally and metaphorically) in the Mediterranean, the first big test for the force will come off Turkey next month at a large-scale international exercise.

THE first ship carrying aid to Somalia protected by a Royal Navy-led shield has avoided the pirate scourge.

Escorted by HMS Northumberland, MV Semlow docked in Mogadishu, the Somali capital, bringing a month's supply of food – split peas and other nourishment – for 50,000 people.

The Semlow, a small, rather worn freighter, was the first vessel to be escorted under the EU's new anti-piracy mission, Operation Atalanta.

The mission was launched in December by the European Union, with Briton Rear Admiral Phil Jones and his staff chosen to oversee the vast operation.

And while the media focus has been concentrated on the efforts of Atalanta's task force to chase off and eradicate pirates, key to the operation is the safe arrival of aid from the UN's World Food Programme in Somalia.

Around three million Somalis – roughly two fifths of the populace – rely on aid as the collapse of government, tribal squabbles and war have brought the country's agricultural economy crashing down.

And it's getting worse. In the past three years, the demand for food aid has risen eightfold; more than 250,000 tons of food were delivered by the UN in 2008, nine tenths of it by sea.

Not only did the food crisis in Somalia worsen in 2008. So too did the pirate threat. More than 100 attacks against shipping in the country's waters were recorded last year.

MV Semlow knows all about the piracy threat; the ship was held ransom for more than three months back in 2005 – and her crew were understandably reluctant to return to Somalia.

But they did. HMS Northumberland met the Semlow in the Kenyan port of Mombasa, then escorted her for four days up Africa's east coast to Mogadishu at a sedentary six knots.

"We realised that Semlow is just an anagram of 'me slow'," observed Cdr Martin Simpson, Northumberland's CO (whose ship can reach speeds upwards of 30kts...).

"There were times when, against the current and the north-easterly winds, she was barely making 3kts."

As the two vessels neared the Somali capital, Northumberland closed up to action stations with her upper deck weapons fully manned. The frigate's 'green team' – her Royal Marines detachment



● The MV Semlow – "an anagram of 'me slow'" – is shepherded by HMS Northumberland towards Mogadishu

– joined the Semlow to offer the freighter extra protection, while Northumberland's Merlin buzzed around overhead surveying the area.

"What greeted us was a scene of complete infrastructure collapse – bombed-out buildings, no traffic, few people," said Cdr Simpson. "The only sign of life was a few Somali fishermen in skiffs scraping a living."

"These were nervous times for us as any building could be harbouring a sniper or RPG, whilst a fishing skiff could just as easily be a pirate or suicide boat."

As it turned out, Semlow reached her destination safely and began offloading her cargo.

Cdr Simpson continued:

"There can be no better – or more worthwhile – task than supporting the safe and timely delivery of food aid to this war-torn and neglected country."

"The food that the MV Semlow carried is vital and its safe delivery was of the utmost importance. The ship's company and myself are proud to have carried out a mission that will have tangible benefit to the people of Somalia."

Despite the euphoria at a mission accomplished, Semlow's sluggish progress had a knock-on effect on the Type 23's programme. Would she make Dubai in time for Christmas?

Well, you'll be pleased to know that Christmas was not cancelled.

The ship 'put her foot down' in a bid to reach the Gulf metropolis

(2,000 nautical miles in four days).

The gods were less than kind to her, however. She sailed into the teeth of a monsoon with winds of up to 30kts and the sea, at times, nudging state eight (waves touching 45ft). (Pre-)Christmas lunch was served in the middle of the Indian Ocean with the ship "bouncing around like a cork".

Still, despite the inclement weather, the frigate arrived in Dubai's Port Rashid on December 22. Atalanta was temporarily put on the back-burner and the sailors embarked on a new mission, 'The Great Middle East Wallet-Emptying Exercise' (apparently, quite a few succeeded in the city's malls, hotels and indoor ski slope).

Not all the wallet-emptying has been for personal aggrandisement; the sailors are doing their bit for charity. You might remember that last year, three of the ship's company completed the 'million metre row' challenge (the challenge, if you hadn't guessed, was to row one million metres – more than 620 miles...).

Well, that obviously whetted the sailors' appetite because they've since completed the Mombasa Iron Man Challenge (three half marathons in running, rowing and cycling at the Mombasa Sports Club).

The burst of fitness was prompted by a chance meeting Northumberland's CO had with a lady who runs the first home in the city which cares for youngsters diagnosed with HIV or AIDS.

The Tumaini Children's Home provides a hospice, school and workshop for around six dozen Kenyans – and they should receive a hefty cheque later this spring when the frigate returns to Mombasa.

For now, however, piracy patrols prevail; Northumberland remains attached to an international force – the first naval operation conducted under the EU banner and will attempt to safeguard shipping in the region for at least 12 months.

"Pirates have been threatening to cut off the humanitarian lifeline to Somalia, but now the EU is providing the comprehensive protection we have been calling for," said the World Food Programme's Chief Operating Officer, Ramiro Lopes da Silva.

"This means we can guarantee a flow of food assistance to the people of Somalia who are suffering from drought, conflict, and the impact of high food prices."

Atalanta has also scored its first major anti-piracy success. The crew of the 65,000-ton Egyptian cargo ship Wadi al Arab came under attack from marauders in the Gulf of Aden and called the European force – officially EUNAVFOR Somalia – for help.

German frigate Karlsruhe came to the merchantman's aid, launching her helicopter and firing warning shots, causing the pirates to break off their attack. The German sailors subsequently arrested several pirates, confiscating their weapons and equipment before releasing them.

Time to do 1's duty

YOU should see more sailors and marines moving around the UK in uniform in 2009 thanks to a push by the government and RN to raise the profile of the three Forces.

A study carried out by the MOD last year determined that one of the best ways for the military to be acknowledged by the public was to wear uniform when out and about.

The IRA threat of the 70s and 80s put an end to sailors and marines going about civilian business in uniform.

Despite efforts by naval leaders in recent years to encourage matelots and green berets to wear uniforms outside the confines of establishments, Whitehall believes the practice is still not prevalent enough.

To that end, new guidance for wearing uniform has been issued.

The Navy Board wants to see sailors in uniform:

- visiting banks, garages, shopping centres, restaurants and coffee shops; travelling to and from establishments, whether on public/private transport or on foot; passing through civilian airports on leave or heading to/from the place of duty; weddings and graduation ceremonies.

Sailors should not be seen in uniform however:

- in a pub (unless authorised by a senior officer); when on leave; in Northern Ireland; events where the reputation or political impartiality of the RN might be brought into question; part-time employment outside working hours; if hitchhiking.

Hand-in-hand with these guidelines, the RN is also introducing new instructions on the wearing of 'Combat 95' – the camouflage fatigues which have in many cases become "the de-facto daily working dress" in the Senior Service.

Although a series of RN/RM flashes and insignia have been added to Combat 95s to emphasise that the wearer is a member of the Naval Service, the public still see khaki and invariably think 'soldier'.

As a result, combat fatigues will only be worn by RN personnel who can demonstrate "clear, practical and environmental reasons" for doing so.

Instead, sailors will be expected to wear general duty rig (No.3s) or action working dress (No.4s), and commandos should wear 'Half Lovats' (No.3A/3C) or training rig (No.3B).

More details can be found in a string of official documents – Galaxy Brief 16/08, RNTM 230/08 and RNTM 231/08.

Lusty does the brake and VAAC

NAVAL jet pilots of the future have a new roll – thanks to pioneering experiments aboard HMS Illustrious.

Yes, we mean 'roll', not 'role'; a decade hence, Fleet Air Arm aviators will roll to a stop aboard HM Ships Queen Elizabeth and Prince of Wales.

A series of test flights involving a unique Harrier and Lusty at the tail end of last year confirmed that the novel approach to landing would be possible when the jump jet's successor, the Joint Strike Fighter, enters service next decade.

Currently Harriers hover alongside the flight deck, 'slide' over it, and drop down – a manoeuvre both challenging and requiring a considerable amount of fuel.

A rolling landing is just that – the aircraft lands on deck in a more traditional fashion, except that it uses its brakes rather than arrestor wires to bring it to a stop. It allows the JSF to bring a heavier payload back home – and places less stress on the engine.

Such a landing does, however, place considerable stress on the aircraft, so much stress in fact that Whitehall was worried that it could damage the JSF.

It called in experts from Qinetiq, the defence technology firm, to find a solution.

It did. Its experts devised the 'Bedford Array', a hi-tech piece of wizardry which tells the pilot whether he's making the correct approach for a rolling landing – even in rough seas.

Lusty's flight deck is too small to permit rolling landings, but test pilots in a specially-adapted two-seat Harrier, the VAAC (Vectored-thrust Aircraft Advanced Control), conducted an identical 'rolling landing' approach on more than 200 occasions during a week of trials in the Channel to prove that the Bedford Array works.

"The UK has an incredible heritage of innovation in naval aviation and pioneered many things now taken for granted in the carrier world," said Qinetiq test pilot Justin Paines.

"With the Bedford Array we've done it again. We've developed an approach aid that has application beyond the Joint Strike Fighter to other forms of aircraft."

The VAAC has been used extensively in paving the way for the future jet. Its avionics have been rebuilt to allow the pilot to fly the aircraft as if it's the JSF (the second pilot can fly the Harrier conventionally when required).

The trials with Illustrious were among the final acts in the VAAC's career. After four decades' flight it's due to be retired this spring.

● A pilot's eye view of the JSF, page 25



● The VAAC Harrier and a full-size mock-up of a Joint Strike Fighter on the flight deck of HMS Illustrious during the rolling landing trials

Dhabi meeting

THERE are sounds you traditionally associate with Christmas.

Carols from King's. The Queen standing next to a roaring fireside wishing her subjects all the best. The Pope doing likewise (minus the roaring fire) to the masses in St Peter's Square. A plasticine Northernner giving his endorsement: "Cracking toast, Gromit." Jimmy Stewart running through the snow-covered streets of Bedford Falls yelling: "Merry Christmas, movie house!" Perhaps even Steve McQueen revving up his motorbike to jump those fences.

Hammers, chisels and other implements which go bang, clang and clatter probably don't enter into it.

But as the waft of roast turkey, gravy and sprouts (*the Devil's vegetable* – Assistant Ed) began to drift through the hallowed passageways and compartments of HMS Lancaster, it wasn't just the chefs (sorry, logisticians (catering services (preparation))) at work.

No, even if Christmas Day was not 'a day like any other', then nor was it a day without work for the ship's company of HMS Lancaster.

The frigate spent December 25 in Abu Dhabi (a balmy 23°C) taking a break from patrolling Iraq's oil platforms – but not a break from work.

Having operated in the shallow, hot, saline waters of the Northern Gulf for four months – and in spite of the enormous effort that went into cleaning and painting the upper deck for the high-profile task of escorting the QE2 into her new home of Dubai in November – the Red Rose was in much need of some TLC, officially known as a Self-Maintenance Period.

And there's a clue in the title: 'self', as in 'do it your...'

"We knew when we left our base port of Portsmouth that there were just the odd one or two things to get done – and that's not taking into consideration the sand ingested, the effect of the heat and salt on the deck and ship's sides, and the general wear and tear inside the ship after four months of deployment," explained WO2 Dave Plant.

"The boys have done well – they worked incredibly hard over the Christmas period to sustain the ship into the New Year. There were only four 'Lazy Sunday' routines – and two of those were for the festive celebrations

"Don't ever say that I said it, but it was impressive to see their pride to get the job done."

In fact the senior rate has been more than modest in relating the success of the SMP.

Apart from all engines being stripped down and cleaned, there was a good deal of general maintenance, changing defective parts that had been 'made good' by the engineers over the past four months, on top of an almost complete repainting of the upper deck and cleaning of many of the main engineering and habitable spaces onboard.

The ship's efforts were supported by the arrival of containers from the UK carrying all their essential spares for the remainder of the deployment.

But with all this work, was there any doubt that Lancaster might not sail on time and resume her platform patrols? WO Plant gave a wry smile (that might be a yes!).

Sail on time the Queen's ship (Her Majesty is the Duke of Lancaster...) did, and with a 'fast cruise' on the last harbour day to boot to check everything worked

and make sure everyone knew what to do in the unlikely event of an emergency.

Oh yes, did we forget to say that one fifth of the junior rate manning had also swapped over during the spell in Abu Dhabi – a major executive and logistical headache in itself?

SMP complete, and with the Gulf sun reflecting off her resplendent new paintwork, HMS Lancaster has once more sailed for the Northern Gulf – spending New Year's Eve on patrol.

As she departed the emirate, her younger sister HMS Portland arrived, taking a break from her 'freedom of the high seas' mission in the Indian Ocean.

So with the minimum of fuss and celebration over the Christmas period, and with New Year itself spent as another operational day of vigilance around the oil platforms, Lancaster is positioned once again up the sharp end of the Northern Gulf.

Mind you, one thing had changed by the time the frigate reached the tip of the Gulf again.

Combined Task Force 158 (which safeguards the terminals) is now Combined Task Force Iraqi Maritime. Not exactly snappy, but at least we won't confuse it with task forces 150 (Indian Ocean) and 152 (southern Gulf) any more.

Name change or not, the mission remains constant: don't let anyone blow up the terminals which generate nine-tenths of Iraq's wealth.

"It doesn't matter on the time of year, the public holidays, the day of the week, the hour of the day," said Surg Lt Nic 'The Doc' Dodds, the ship's, er, doc.

"There will be and always is a British warship close to any conflict zone in the world that

you care to point to on a chart, ready at a moment's notice, with a single command: to go to action and deal with the eventuality as it happens. It just happens that HMS Lancaster is 'it' in the Gulf."

She is 'it' – but not for much longer; HMS Richmond is due to relieve the Red Rose shortly.

Meanwhile, near Bahrain...

One half of the RN minehunting force in the Gulf, Sandown's HMS Ramsey and Blyth, has also been in Abu Dhabi – although somewhat earlier in December.

The two mine countermeasures ships popped into the metropolis during work with the UAE, then made for Bahrain, the hub of RN naval operations in the Gulf.

● HMS Lancaster – as seen from her sister HMS Portland – is silhouetted against the imposing Abu Dhabi skyline

Picture: LA(Phot) Alex Cave, FRPU East

It's a short hop between the two ports (about 300 miles) and one not typically requiring a top-up of fuel.

But when in Rome... With the huge USNS Lewis and Clark (similar to the RFA's Forts) bimbly around the southern Gulf, it would be rude not to pay her a visit.

At 40,000 tonnes the floating filling station displaces more than 60 times Ramsey and Blyth's weight (in fact, the stores ship carries as much fuel as a Type 23 displaces).

Both RN vessels moored alongside the Lewis and Clark and took fuel on board in return for

some ship's badges (which seems a very fair exchange to us...).

Christmas for the duo was spent alongside in Bahrain (two degrees Celsius cooler than in Abu Dhabi) and despite enjoying all the usual festivities – secret Santa, raffle, decorations, turkey – the ships were at 12 hours' notice to move.

Their two-year-plus stint in the Gulf is almost at an end, however. Pembroke and Grimsby are due to replace them any day, with Blyth and Ramsey returning to the (slightly) cooler climes of Faslane.

■ On Christmas patrol with HMS Portland, pages 14-15



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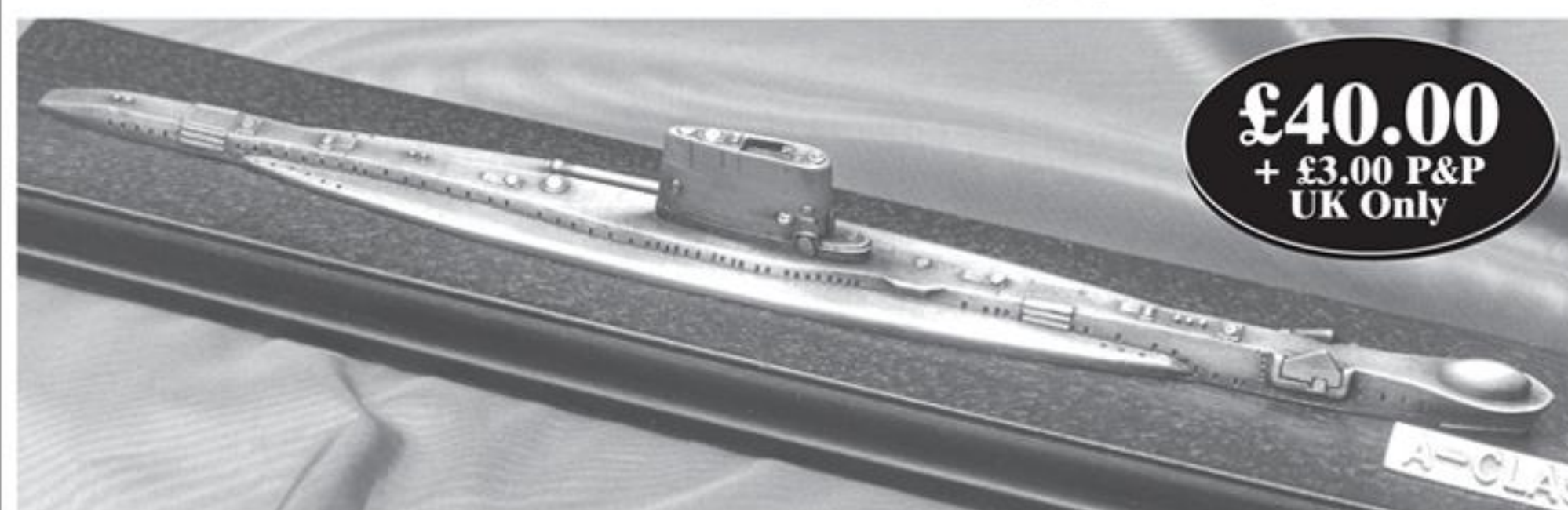
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Work for Echo to 'pore over

FOR much of the past four or five months, Singapore has become a second home to the men and women of HMS Echo.

And as long-term guests, well it's only fair that you help around the house.

The skills and hi-tech kit held by the survey ship (on a five-year hydrographic deployment, mainly east of Suez) were used to provide the very latest information on the state of the waters around the wharves at Sembawang.

Although the yard has long since ceased to be a Royal Navy base, Britain still has dedicated wharves and basins, looked after by an RN officer (Cdr Paul Haycock) and a small team and used by visiting Commonwealth vessels.

Before the survey could begin in earnest, the Echoers had to install a tide pole in the basin and compare readings over a period of 25 hours (a daily tidal cycle) with readings from the Singaporean tide gauge in Sembawang dockyard.

ABs Castles and Broadhead had great fun (we're told) dressing in dry suits and jumping into the water to fix the tide pole to the side of the basin.

Needed next was horizontal control for the survey by determining the GPS positions and heights of four previously-established benchmarks (to an accuracy of 2mm).

Not all the work was done in the water, however. Echo's survey team planted RTK (Real Time Kinematic) GPS systems on the jetties and shores around Sembawang to confirm the accuracy of the current charted coastline and buildings in the vicinity of the berths.

The ship launched her small Survey Motor Boat Pathfinder to collect reams of data in the basin and approaches.

That information was turned into 3D sonar 'images' to check the depth of the water and to determine the presence and location of any objects on the seabed.



Pilot's error led to Royal's helo death

PILOT error led to the death of a Royal Marine in a helicopter crash near Baghdad in late 2007.

Twenty-six-year-old commando Cpl Lee Fitzsimmons, from Peterborough, and Sgt John Battersby, a 31-year-old in the Queen's Lancashire Regiment were killed when the RAF Puma they were passengers in toppled over during a night-time mission.

An official board of inquiry report says the two men were partially or completely thrown out of the helicopter by the force of the crash in November 2007.

Despite the best efforts of the surviving crew and passengers to free the trapped pair, fire engulfed the Puma and they were killed.

The official report into the accident says the helicopter had made a heavy landing as a result of the dust kicked up on the ground at Salman Pak.

The pilot feared the Puma was about to roll over and tried to take off. He became disorientated by the dust, the blades struck the ground, the Puma flipped on to its right side and rolled along the ground for several seconds.

The subsequent fire set off flares, grenades and other ammunition and became far too intense for the crew with their handheld extinguishers to cope with it. Within four minutes, the Puma was all but destroyed.

The board concluded that pilot error – 'controlled flight into terrain' – was the cause of the accident; he became disorientated by using the wrong technique for a dusty take-off.

Squeezing more from Sea Kings

THE venerable Sea King should be in the skies 20 per cent more frequently in the coming decade.

Whitehall has signed a £258m deal with Rolls-Royce to provide – and support – the engines of the UK's entire Sea King fleet.

The aircraft is the backbone of the Commando Helicopter Force, currently deployed in Afghanistan, as well as the mainstay of the RAF and RN's Search and Rescue operation, while the Mk7 version of the helicopter – the 'bagger' – carries out the Fleet Air Arm's airborne surveillance and control mission.

All variants of the Sea King rely on two Rolls-Royce Gnome engines to power them.

Under the deal signed with the aerospace giant, Rolls-Royce will be required to deliver the engines, repair and overhaul them and provide spares for the next ten years. The MOD reckons the deal should save it £70m over the coming decade instead of the existing arrangement.

● St George for England... A wave for HMS Cumberland at the end of her anti-piracy patrol
Picture: LA(Phot) Jenny Lodge, FRPU West



Fantastic four

YOU wait seven months for a warship and then four turn up in the space of a week.

The ebbing days of 2008 saw a flurry of homecomings just in time for their ships' companies to enjoy the Yuletide festivities.

First back – and home from probably the most varied deployment of 2008 – were the men and women of the good ship Kent.

The Type 23 frigate was dispatched to the Far East on a goodwill tour, mixed with the serious business of exercising with allied navies and chasing pirates and terrorists around the Indian Ocean.

Kent left Portsmouth on June 1, paid three visits to Singapore (but missed the grand prix – as she did visiting other countries in the Far East), paid a high-profile visit to China (arriving just after the Olympics...), climbed Mount Fuji (well, her sailors did), called in on Hong Kong, Malaysia, Indonesia and Sri Lanka before tackling the terror/piracy/smuggling threat in the Indian Ocean at the tail end of the six-month tour of duty.

In all these places – and more – the frigate had served "as a physical symbol of the Royal Navy", CO Cdr Simon Hopper said proudly.

Besides several hundred friends and family, the warship was welcomed home by Prince Michael of Kent – brother of the

ship's sponsor Princess Alexandra and Honorary Rear Admiral of the Royal Naval Reserve – and Second Sea Lord Vice Admiral Alan Massey.

The royal guest spent a couple of hours chatting with members of the 174-strong ship's company before departing Kent ahead of her entry into Portsmouth so all the attention of the homecoming would be fixed upon the sailors.

"I am extremely proud of the hard work my team have put in over the last seven months. They have done everything possible to ensure that HMS Kent has represented the UK and the Royal Navy with absolute professionalism half-way around the world," said Cdr Hopper.

"We have visited some fascinating countries during our deployment, but nothing beats the feeling of coming home to see families and friends waiting on the jetty and the chance to see Pompey playing live at Fratton Park again."

After Christmas leave and a spell of maintenance, the frigate faces a work up then deployment east of Suez again in the spring – or, as her commanding officer put it, "there is a hunger to carry on".

Hot on Kent's heels, good

Solent folk gave an equally hearty cheer to HMS Iron Duke which had spent seven months in the Atlantic, North and South.

She began in the North, focusing her efforts in the Caribbean and drug smuggling (and just happened to have Prince William on board as part of his immersion into life in all three Forces).

Just four days after arriving in theatre, the ship's Lynx intercepted a speedboat crammed with £50m cocaine off Barbados. The ship followed that bust by apprehending a fuel smuggler off Dominica.

From stopping the bad guys, the frigate then did a volte face to help the needy as Hurricanes Gustav

and Ike steamrolled through the Caribbean. More than half the ship's company were involved in the clean-up operation on Grand Turk where they helped to restore essential services.

And then another complete change for the 180 men and women: six weeks in the Falklands and environs, including South Georgia, before finally heading for the Solent.

"The last seven months have been among the most challenging – and rewarding – of my naval career," said CO Cdr Mark Newland.

"After the counter-drugs and hurricane relief operations in the Caribbean, the change in tasking to the South Atlantic presented a subtly-different challenge – one which Iron Duke rose to. I am immensely proud of my ship's company for all they have achieved."

Equally proud is Cdr Peter Sparkes who brought HMS Cumberland into Devonport the following day.

The Mighty Sausage's deployment was rather shorter than Iron Duke's at four months – but she too hit the headlines.

You might just have read about her anti-piracy mission off Somalia, which reached its climax with four pirate vessels being interdicted, a substantial weapons cache being seized, and several pirate skiffs being sunk.

The Type 22 frigate sailed initially to join NATO's Standing Maritime Group 2, which typically patrols the Med.

But with pirates in the Indian Ocean becoming increasingly brazen – and ruthless – NATO sent the task force to waters off Somalia to escort food aid ships

safely into the troubled African country.

Cdr Sparkes said that often Cumberland's presence alone was sufficient to thwart the brigands.

But if the sight of a warship bristling with weaponry wasn't enough, the ship would fire flares, sound her horns, flash lights and make repeated radio calls in a bid to make the pirates surrender.

And when that failed on one occasion, the ship's Royal Marines boarding party was dispatched, protected by the ship's Lynx buzzing around overhead.

"Piracy will not be tolerated and the RN – along with its Allied and Coalition partners – is ready, willing and able to bring to justice those criminals who disrupt legitimate trade by engaging in theft and taking hostages at sea," said Cdr Sparkes.

"HMS Cumberland has made a very real contribution to the international effort to combat piracy – and sent a clear message to those involved in it. I am extremely proud of what the Royal Navy – and we in Cumberland – have achieved."

And you don't even need a warship to enjoy a homecoming. The men of HMS Atherstone are home, even if their ship is not.

The Hunt-class warship is on a long-term deployment to the Gulf with her sister HMS Chiddingfold.

To sustain operations, sailors on all eight Hunts are being rotated through the Gulf.

This latest batch of sailors to call Atherstone their home took charge of her in July – as temperatures in the Gulf reached their climax of 50°C – and returned just in time for Christmas (when it was struggling to reach 0°C in Pompey).

The highlight of the deployment was a (lightning) visit to Umm Qasr – the first since RN and RFA vessels re-opened the port during the 2003 war with Saddam Hussein.

"It proved to be a challenging time operating in an extreme environment," said Lt Cdr Steven Holloway, Atherstone's CO.

"My team worked superbly – sometimes in arduous conditions, keeping the ship seaworthy and proving the UK's expertise in mine warfare which is critical to the Coalition effort."

"We have played our part in providing stability in the region."

Atherstone sailors have traded places with the ship's company of HMS Quorn, who are now guardians of the 'Crazy A' in Bahrain.



● William 'Bill' Stone, pictured by legendary war photographer Don McCullin – a portrait taken to commemorate the 90th anniversary of the end of the Great War

A remarkable, long, healthy, and happy life

THE passing of WW1 veteran William 'Bill' Stone leaves just one man left of tge 650,000-plus men who served in the greatest Navy Britain ever sent to sea.

The chief stoker, who died last month at the age of 108, was the last British veteran of both global conflagrations.

He joined the Senior Service on his 18th birthday in September 1918, following his three elder brothers as a stoker – and rejecting the recruiting efforts of the Army. He was still undergoing training when the armistice was signed six weeks later.

The young stoker served in battle-cruiser HMS Tiger before joining 'the mighty Hood' – Bill would become a mainstay of her association in years to come and proudly wore a blazer emblazoned with the ship's badge – taking part in the ship's legendary 'Empire cruise' in the mid-1920s.

The rating spent much of the Inter-War period in the Mediterranean and South Africa before joining HMS Salamander in Portland in 1937.

With her he would sail to Dunkirk five times to rescue British and French troops trapped by the Germans – days the by-now senior rating regarded as the darkest of his naval career.

There were, of course, five more years of war after Dunkirk and Bill Stone was in the thick of it, taking part in the Atlantic convoys and Mediterranean campaign (for which he earned a Mention in Dispatches following a torpedo attack on HMS Newfoundland).

He was finally demobbed in September 1945 and returned to his native Devon, taking up a trade which he had learned during his naval days: a barber.

In later years, Bill Stone became fêted by a host of organisations, associations and the RN. He was invited to watch the Trafalgar 200 Fleet Review in the Solent, was a regular guest at WW1 commemorative events and reunions of HMS Hood veterans.

His last public engagement was taking part in the November ceremonies in Whitehall last year.

He was renowned for his love of life – and his love of singing (All the Nice Girls Love A Sailor being a particular favourite). He would often entertain fellow veterans with his rendition of old-time songs, frequently with alternative words.

"William had a remarkable, long, healthy, and happy life. He thoroughly enjoyed going to events, meeting people and, whenever possible, regaling those around him with his fund of naval stories and jokes," said his daughter Anne.

"He was a very determined character, a man of great faith and his recipe for long life was: clean living, contented mind and trust in God. His motto: keep going."

There are now just two WW1 veterans left in Britain – Henry Allingham, once of the Royal Naval Air Service, and former soldier Harry Patch.

You can read Bill's remarkable life story at the HMS Hood Association website: hmshood.com/crew/biography/wstone_bio.htm

Noticeboard, pages 32-33



BRITISH LIMBLESS EX-SERVICE MEN'S ASSOCIATION

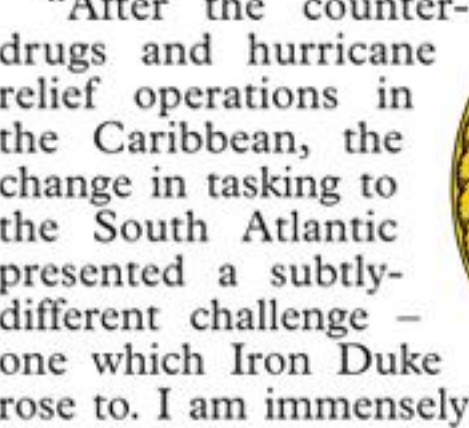
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But with pirates in the Indian Ocean becoming increasingly brazen – and ruthless – NATO sent the task force to waters off Somalia to escort food aid ships

Ultimate test of Endurance

Engines swapped via galley

LAST month we promised to feature 'a busy day for Endurance'.

And how. Just not the anticipated one...

December 16 2008 proved to be the most fateful day in the Antarctic survey ship's 17-year career.

The ship's company were close to abandoning the icebreaker after her engine room flooded following a suspected valve failure.

The flood – some 200 miles west of the Chilean port of Punta Arenas – left Endurance adrift, without power and in danger of running aground in the Strait of Magellan.

The combined efforts of the Red Plum's damage control parties and Chilean tugs ensured the ship did not founder.

Ten civilians – members of the British Schools Exploring Society who had joined the icebreaker to conduct scientific research and ecological studies – were flown off by a Chilean Navy Puma helicopter.

No ship's company were injured in the incident, which is now the subject of an official investigation and Board of Inquiry (which is why this account of the incident sadly lacks the vivid accounts of the crew's deeds in saving her).

"The situation was extremely difficult, but the exceptional damage control efforts and professionalism of the ship's company kept Endurance safe and help soon arrived in the form of a Chilean tug," said CO Capt Gavin Pritchard.

He said he and his ship's company had been warmed by messages of support from friends and family around the globe.

The stricken vessel was towed



● Calm before the storm... Seals catch some rays on the shore at King Edward Point in South Georgia while HMS Endurance is berthed

Picture: LA(Phot) Kaz Williams, HMS Endurance

first to Punta Arenas then to the Falklands, where she remains.

Most of her sailors were flown home from Chile and the Falklands with just a skeleton staff left behind to look after her.

Despite what you read in some papers, the ship is not being scrapped.

She will be repaired and returned to service – once a heavy

lift ship has ferried her home safely to Portsmouth from the Falklands.

Engineers were still assessing the extent of the damage to the ship as *Navy News* went to press, so we cannot give you a timescale on when the Red Plum will be back in service (or the cost of repairs for that matter).

Anyway, before half the Southern

Ocean poured in, Endurance did at least finish her first (and only...) work period in Antarctic waters this austral summer. That work ended in South Georgia with the emphasis on fur seals.

The British Antarctic Survey is counting the island's seal population which has exploded since culling stopped.

It's thought the mammals'

numbers now total in excess of five million... and we should know for sure one day.

Scores of images were taken by Endurance's Lynx flying over South Georgia.

They've now been handed to the scientists to count – manually marking dots on the male, female and pups' heads (*sounds like fun – Ed*).

MAJOR maintenance work – including the removal of a diesel engine which entailed the partial demolition of a galley – has been going well on frigate HMS Argyll.

Sections of the galley floor and ceiling had to be removed so that the old engine could be craned out and the new one installed as part of the five-week package.

Many other jobs have also been completed, with work on weapons and firefighting systems, diving on the hull and painting to ensure that Argyll is not only in the best material state that she can be, but that she also looks her best.

With the ship's company making the most of the time to top-up fitness levels (*see page 43*), both the ship and her sailors should be fighting fit for the forthcoming Taurus deployment.

Investigation into deaths

THE MOD has confirmed that an investigation is under way into a suspected friendly fire incident in Afghanistan on January 14 this year.

Two men – Capt Tom Sawyer of the Royal Artillery and Cpl Danny Winter of the Royal Marines – were killed in the incident, while two other members of their fire support team were injured.

The incident happened during an operation involving some 100 NATO personnel from Denmark and the UK, aimed at clearing enemy forces from the 'Green Zone' near Gereshk in Helmand.

A Military Police investigation is now being conducted into the incident – normal procedure when a fatality occurs.

Thenew Housing Association offers first time buyers a helping hand onto the housing market

Park Court, Carmyle, Glasgow

Thenew Housing Association is working with Merchant Homes to provide 24 luxury flats for buyers on low incomes, people in the Armed Forces or veterans and other groups, such as people who have had a significant change in their household circumstances.

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Offered under a shared equity scheme, the brand new homes deliver outstanding value for money and allow prospective buyers to own their own home, but significantly pay just a proportion of the sale price.

The scheme is known as "new supply shared equity (NSSE)" which is part of a Scottish Government initiative to help people own their first home.

In challenging economic times such as we are experiencing now, the concept is proving a huge success and contributing greatly to increasing home ownership among first-time buyers on low incomes and a number of other groups.

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Brum guns go for it

SIX thousand roaring spectators, the glare of spotlights, the adrenaline pumping. And best of all, the chance to beat the Crabs.

A scratch RN-led team of field gunners stepped out into the lion's den of Birmingham's National Indoor Arena for the 20th anniversary military tattoo, filling a minute void left by the Army.

With the Glasshouse (aka the Military Corrective Training Centre in Colchester) unable to provide a team, the call went out around the Services for a replacement – with just two weeks to go.

The gauntlet was picked up (largely but not solely by RN personnel) at Abbey Wood who 'borrowed' legendary field gun trainer Lt Mal Tonge from Portsmouth and headed to RAF Cosford for a mere two days of training.

The (admittedly considerably younger) RAF chaps – the Abbey Wood team's opponents come race day – gave the 18 Bristol gunners (actually drawn from all over the military, including Culdrose and Catterick),

"the world's coldest hardened aircraft shelter" and a track that was just a little bit too short to practise on.

So there you have it. A makeshift team. Two days' training in less-than-ideal facilities. Yes, it was all set up for a famous underdog victory.

And we'd like to tell you that experience triumphed over youth. But we'd be lying.

Nevertheless they opened their account with a triumph over Cosford – and discovered that the indoor arena's surface made the race "something akin to field gun on ice," said systems engineer 'Mickey' Rooney.

Proof of that came on the second day of the event; the limber took on a life of its own and performed a powerslide down the track when the Abbey Wood team failed to connect to the gun for the run home.

So defeat, yes, but far from an ignoble one – and an experience none of the 18 runners will forget.

"The excitement and build-up of tension as the two crews waited to march on is impossible to describe with hearts thumping and passion rising," enthused Lt Cdr Charlie Deal, Abbey Wood field gun officer.

"You have the roar of a 6,000-strong crowd, the pride of being part of a crew, the feeling as you march out into the arena – and the competition are right beside you.

"Both crews were very much a credit to the Services and the field gun ethos – rivals on the track, comrades above all – came to the fore once again."



Three bells sound for Illustrious

FOR most ships, one's enough.

Two is a rare luxury. And three, well three is just showing off.

No, we're not talking about Shredded Wheat at breakfast time but ship's bells – and HMS Illustrious now has three.

For aside from the one cast for the current carrier when she was built nearly three decades ago, there are two 'newcomers' aboard the famous flat-top.

Actually, we say 'new', but both are more than six decades old.

The Portsmouth-based strike carrier has been presented with two bells once prominent in her predecessor.

The first was the original bell of Illustrious IV; it was damaged by shrapnel (pictured above by Illustrious' LA (Phot) Darby Allen) when the carrier was dive-bombed by the Luftwaffe whilst delivering aircraft to Malta.

The damaged warship was sent to the safety of Norfolk, Virginia, for repairs – where she spent several months, plenty of time to cast a new bell.

She returned to the Mediterranean and continued to serve with distinction until being dispatched to the Far East for the final onslaught against the Japanese Empire, during which time she was severely damaged by a kamikaze.

The ship eventually paid off in 1954 and was broken up in the late 50s in Faslane, but her two bells survived.

The original eventually ended up at the Fleet Air Arm Museum, where it had the power to move veterans to tears, director Graham Mottram explained as he loaned the bell to the present-day Lusty.

One of the ship's chaplains was reduced to tears when he saw the bell; it reminded him of the men he committed to the ocean after the enemy attacks.

"I don't know of an artefact that I've seen affect a veteran in such a dramatic and emotional way," said Mr Mottram.

The second bell was held by the Association of British Insurers; its director general, Stephen Haddrill, handed it over to Illustrious' CO Capt Steve Chick.

"It's a great honour to have two significant pieces of Illustrious' history on board," said Capt Chick.

"They emphasise the proud history and tradition that the name HMS Illustrious carries.

"Ships bells have always been a focal point for the ship and are still used for christenings."

Farewell to the 42s

THE 'ghost fleet' of aged destroyers in Portsmouth Harbour has finally dispersed.

HMS Cardiff, Newcastle and Glasgow had been awaiting their fate in Fareham Creek since being paid off in 2005.

With no buyers willing to take on the vessels as working ships, the trio are being broken up (or 'recycled' in modern parlance) in Turkey.

Newcastle and Cardiff were towed out of Portsmouth at the end of 2008.

Glasgow, which survived an Argentine bomb passing through her during the Falklands War, was the last of the sisters to head to the Mediterranean.

Tugs hauled her out of harbour, watched by a smattering of veterans on Round Tower.



Picture: LS Chris Browne



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● The diving team prepare a comrade before he plunges into the chilly waters of Loch Laggan, nearly 900ft above sea level

Divers with altitude

THINK of sport at altitude.

Bob Beamon leaping majestically through the thin air of Mexico City, Gordon Banks making that save. Perhaps a trek through the Himalayan foothills or a climb to Macchu Picchu.

A Scottish loch in the depths of winter oddly doesn't seem quite as enticing.

And this wasn't a question of sport but potentially a matter of life and death as the leading seaman divers professional qualifying course (for the record, the 89th) headed to Loch Laggan in the Highlands for the RN's first altitude diving in more than 20 years.

The loch, about an hour's drive north-east of Fort William, is the largest freshwater lake in the United Kingdom.

It also sits 272 metres (890ft) above sea level. But what's the big deal?

Well, we're glad you asked. Altitude diving incurs extra decompression penalties – the amount of time it takes to decompress to ensure that divers don't suffer from the bends.

In simple terms, the guys planned and conducted a 30-metre (98ft) rummage around in chilly Loch Laggan as if they were carrying out a 42-metre (137ft) dive into the ocean.

Four diving serials were carried out by the trainee air supervisors and their overseers, led

by PO(D) Richard Walker, using the Open Space Diving System kit.

The reason?

There's always the possibility that naval divers might be called on to recover a downed helicopter, a car that's careered into a lake, perhaps some weaponry ditched by an aircraft, searching for bodies or even improvised explosive device (ie bomb) disposal.

Diving at altitude poses extra challenges – and dangers – for the frogmen, compounded at Laggan by the relatively inaccessibility of the spot the team wished to dive on.

The road ended a good 400 metres from the water's edge, which meant the divers had to lug (technical term) all their kit manually to the loch.

For all the cold, for all the physical and technical difficulties, the men came back from Laggan beaming.

"They said it was the best thing on the course," said course officer Lt Shaun McKeever. "It was cold, it was challenging, but the guys loved it."

Indeed, the officer hopes after the 20-year hiatus, altitude diving will become a permanent fixture in the leading seaman diver's course.

For more details on the clearance diving branch in general, contact WO(D) Steve Strange at the Defence Diving School on 023 9222 4037.

NOW this is something you've not seen before – not on a Merlin at any rate.

A flurry of flares scatters over Salisbury Plain as tests are carried out on the first Defensive Aids Suite to be fitted to the RN's No 1 sub-hunting helicopter.

A DAS is par for the course for Jungly Sea Kings – indeed we've carried images in these pages of the venerable warbirds firing the odd flare or two over the sands of Afghanistan and Iraq.

But on the Merlin there's been no similar counter-measure – until now.

A whole host of experts – Lockheed Martin, QinetiQ, the Air Warfare Centre, Agusta-Westland and the government's Defence Science and Technology Laboratories among others – were asked to put their heads together to give Merlin a DAS of its own.

Oh, and they had to do it before the spring of 2009 so it could be fitted to a Merlin flight due to deploy with a Type 23 frigate.

And as you can see from these pictures, they

succeeded.

A helicopter from 829 NAS – the dedicated Merlin squadron for the Type 23 fleet – was fitted with the new bit of kit in double quick time.

Fliers from the Aircraft Test and Evaluation Centre on Boscombe Down provided the crew and then it was off to the plain for some trials.

The flares are the most visible part of the effort to save the Merlin from being hit by a heat-seeking air-to-air or surface-to-air missile. Electronic wizardry aboard the helicopter also tries to decoy the incoming threat by jamming its

guidance system.

And as the word 'suite' implies, there's more to the defences than 'just' thwarting heat-seekers. The upgrade also includes armoured protection from small arms fire for the crew and the more vulnerable parts of the airframe.

Having fired flares in Wiltshire, the trials team upped sticks and headed to the MOD's North Sea coast ranges for more thorough tests to ensure the suite could detect – and defeat – (mock) incoming missiles.

Picture: Lt Cdr Toby Crispin, ATEC



Merlin's suite dreams

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Capital gains

YOU wait all year to visit your hometown and then, wham, you drop in twice in six weeks.

Barely had the men and women of HMS Westminister left the streets of old London than they were back in the capital.

2008 drew to a close with the frigate heading up the Thames to visit her affiliated city (that's Westminster, not London as a whole).

And 2009 opened with the ship back on the Thames, this time in Docklands as this year's RN representative at the London Boat Show.

More of that later. First, back to the ebbing days of 2008.

Now we often say that impressive sights 'stop traffic'. Well, in HMS Westminister's case that's true. The bascules of Tower Bridge tilted, 'rush hour' became 'stop hour' and the frigate glided through into the Upper Pool of London for a four-day stay,

berthed alongside HMS Belfast.

The ship's company had the rest of the day to prepare for an official reception for 120 local dignitaries, movers and shakers and affiliates. Not least among visitors to the ship was the Duke of Westminster, for whom the Type 23 is named.

Commanding Officer Cdr Ken Houlberg paid his dues – a traditional 'tax' imposed on visiting warships – at the Tower of London, as well as official calls. But all these were preliminaries to the highpoint of the frigate's visit.

Now we said above that Westminster stopped traffic. Well she did it again, but this time not at rush hour.

On a bitterly cold Sunday morning, three quarters of the ship's company formed up at Horse Guards with the Band of HM Royal Marines to celebrate the freedom of the City of Westminster.

There aren't too many people or institutions privileged enough to enjoy that honour – half a dozen in all, including Churchill and Baroness Thatcher.

"2008 was a busy year for the ship and the visit to London was a very special one – a well-appreciated reward for my sailors," said Cdr Houlberg.

"To have seen my ship's company proudly exercising their right to the Freedom of the City of Westminster will certainly be one of the memories that I will treasure for years to come."

And talking of treasured memories, here's one some of the lads certainly won't forget.

The ship's company was

invited to open the London Boat Show... alongside actress and model Kelly Brook. There was, oddly, no shortage of volunteers.

We could talk about Kelly all day (*please do – male members of staff*), but we're *Navy News*, not *FHM*.

So back to battleship grey.

Although the show was hard work for the ship's company – the event was open daily from 10am until 6pm or later – it was nevertheless a welcome break from normal routine.

"We spent eight and a half months away from home last year," said Cdr Houlberg. "The ship's worked hard and this is a good reward."

Westminster and her 170 sailors weren't the only public faces of the RN at the ExCel Centre.

Yachtswoman Dame Ellen MacArthur (also an honorary lieutenant commander in the RNR) joined Rear Admiral Bob Cooling, Assistant Chief of Naval Staff, at the opening of the RN's new recruitment stand.

Just so you don't need to take your tape measure along, it's 960ft² of RN goodness, featuring interactive displays on the role of Britain's naval service.

Interactive displays are all very impressive. Interactive people are even better. The stand is looked after by half a dozen sailors – bolstered during the show by the presence of the Westminster crew.

"My lads and lasses are the best ambassadors for the Royal Navy – they're pretty good at setting a good impression," said Cdr Houlberg.

Credit crunch or not, it didn't stop exhibitors targeting the wealthy.

Land Rover used the event to launch a new model (yours for a 'mere' £43k), while luxury yacht firm Sunseeker unveiled their latest 30m vessel (you *might* get change out of a £10m note).

● Clockwise from top: HMS Westminister passes through Tower Bridge; ET(ME) Shrimpton and AB(Sea) Harper afloat with some essential reading at the Boat Show; Kelly Brook joins sailors from Westminster to open the Boat Show; Westminster floodlit alongside HMS Belfast; sailors from Westminster exercise the Freedom of the City

All well and good, but for Westminster the ordinary public were of far greater interest.

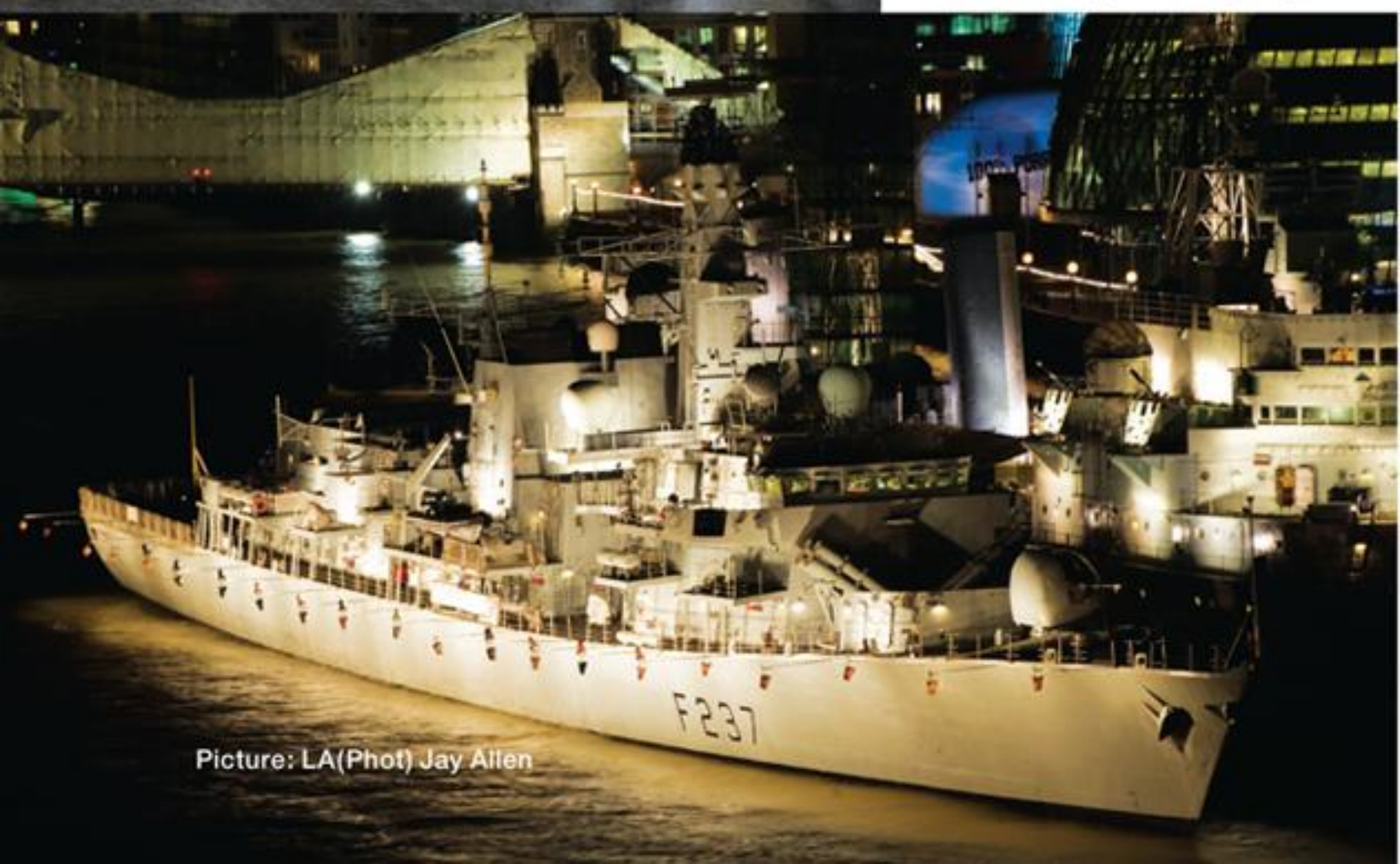
"It's been interesting to speak to people and see what they think – especially kids," said S/Lt Ben Jeffrey.

"They were very knowledgeable – and impressed. Most people seemed very proud of the Navy."

More than 19,000 people visited the ship, and many others met members of the ship's company in the ExCel Centre itself, including the Princess Royal.

Affiliations were also high on the agenda, including the London Underground, St Andrews Club, schools and Sea Cadet units, and there was a mass gathering of the London Opinion Formers – all the lord mayors, consorts and deputy lieutenants of the London boroughs.

The frigate left the show to conduct weapon and aviation training off the South Coast, and as *Navy News* went to press was due to head east for a visit to Copenhagen.



Basra knights



● Time for CRAMming... A Naval Phalanx – one of the guns in the Counter-Rocket, Artillery and Mortar battery – fires a burst of 20mm rounds over Basra airbase during a night-time trial

Picture: LA (Phot) Jannine Hartmann, FRPU East

SHEAFS of fire arc through the night sky.

Seventy-five rounds leave the barrel every second.

What we cannot convey here is the noise – brrt, brrt, brrt – as the 20mm shells are launched into the night and the chilling, oscillating wail of the sirens.

This is Phalanx doing what it is designed to do: destroying incoming projectiles.

But this is not Phalanx at work on a Type 42, carrier or assault ship.

This is Phalanx, mounted on the back of a truck and shooting down incoming rocket and mortar fire at Basra airbase.

For while most media attention is fixed upon Afghanistan – particularly with the impending withdrawal of British forces from Iraq – you could forget there's still a job to do in Basra.

Unless you're a member of the Multi-National Division (South-East).

For just as the RN is leading peacekeeping efforts in Helmand, so too is the Senior Service in charge of the British military mission 1,000 miles to the west in Iraq.

It is here, at Basra airbase, that you will find Royal Marine Maj Gen Andy Salmon and his staff, the Commander UK Amphibious Forces in charge of operations.

And given that the bulk of the Brits in Basra are Army and RAF, they needed to be introduced to the ways of the Senior Service.

For a start there's now a quarterdeck (complete with mainmast and White Ensign).

The key dates in the RN calendar – October 21 (Trafalgar), October 28 (birthday of the Royal Marines) – are marked in true fashion, but the other Services are being immersed in more day-to-day Royal Navy traditions.

Such as clear lower deck.

Soldiers were somewhat bemused when Maj Gen Salmon gathered people around him to discuss the burning issues of the day for the first time. It's now part and parcel of the routine on the air station, which lies to the northwest of Basra.

All this is very land-orientated. So let's get on to the water.

We've featured the Naval Transition Team or NaTT – the Anglo-American organisation responsible for overseeing the training of Iraqi sailors and marines – many times in these pages.

But the Royal Navy's influence on the water doesn't end there.

Also under the division's banner is training for the Iraqis who patrol the Shatt-al-Arab – the waterway upon which Basra sits.

Iraq's Coastal Border Guard (the border with Iran runs down the middle of the river downstream of Basra) shepherd ships to Abu Al Falus port (and in the future to the wharves at Al Maqil, to the northwest of the city centre, too).

Alongside the Iraqi police's riverine patrol, they maintain law and order on the river – and both units receive training in boarding operations, search and rescue, and port security from the Brits.

BACK in 2006, with troops on the ground pleading for more helicopters to support the mission in Basra, Whitehall snapped up six finished Merlins, originally earmarked for Denmark but no longer required by the Scandinavians.

Rustling up air and ground crew to fly what became 1419 Flight and to maintain the new helicopters wasn't quite so simple, so the RAF asked the Fleet Air Arm to fill the gap while they trained more personnel.

Being good eggs the Wafus

agreed. And so for the past two years a small band of sailors – a little over two dozen – have been in action every day with the workhorse helicopters.

Although the aircraft is basically the same, the RN and RAF do fly different variants of the Merlin.

The Fleet Air Arm's model is primarily a submarine-hunter, but can perform general duties. The RAF Merlin, the Mk3, is an all-purpose aircraft (and probably not particularly good at hunting boats...). It's also painted khaki and has a ramp at the rear where all the sub-hunting wizardry is on the RN Merlin.

But if you can fly a grey Merlin, you can fly a khaki one too – and they have, but the team has noticed distinct changes during their tours of duty at Basra air base.

When they arrived in Iraq, the Merlins were heavily in demand as aerial ambulances, as well as troop carriers.

Their activity reached its climax last spring with the 'Charge of the Knights' (also known as the Battle of Basra), the month-long Iraqi Army fight for control of the southern city with the Mahdi militia (who eventually lost).

The helicopters not merely flew supplies and casualties around the Basra area, but also the Iraqi premier Nouri al-Maliki who was keen to follow the progress of the fighting.

There's no doubt that the month-long fighting was a turning point in the city's fortunes as far as the RN fliers are concerned.

Changes became evident immediately – even from the skies above the city given the numbers of people moving around the streets.

"The difference in people is obvious," said Lt Chris Knowles, one of the first Fleet Air Arm Merlin men to deploy to Basra; he returned for his most recent tour of duty in October.

"Smiles and waves are now commonly seen by the crews flying over Basra and locals now look at the aircraft with interest and intrigue rather than distrust and fear.

"Much more of the city has a reliable power supply and the lights spread much further into the darkened suburbs. There is a feeling that something has been achieved and a successful handover to the Iraqis to continue the development can be achieved."

SADLY, not everything in the skies over Basra is friendly. Insurgents like randomly lobbing mortars, missiles and other projectiles – the official term is 'indirect fire' – into the airbase.

Which is why naval Phalanx guns have been mounted on trailers and trucks and dotted around the airbase.

It's actually the Army which is in charge of the guns (16 Regiment Royal Artillery), but one in three of the Service personnel looking after the CRAM – Counter-Rocket, Artillery and Mortar – battery is dark blue.

The matelots man, maintain and repair the Phalanx; every time the guns fired during Operation Telic 12 (we're



● Musicians of the Royal Marines Band Portsmouth perform at sunset in front of the British headquarters in Basra

Photographer: Cpl Adam Fletcher RAF



now on Telic 13), a Senior Serviceman was at the control (there's some 'interesting' footage accompanied by 'lively' commentary on Youtube...).

"CRAM works – and has been saving lives," said Maj Gen Salmon emphatically.

Perhaps proof of that can be found in the fact that the medical centre on the air station – largely run by Royal Navy surgeons and medics – is considerably quieter than it has been during the six-year mission in Iraq.

The fact that fewer patients are coming into the hospital does not mean the medics are quiet; it has allowed them to get out and about into the Basra area to share their knowledge with local doctors and nurses.

For most RN personnel, a tour of duty at Basra lasts several months.

But for a fortunate few, it lasts a few days.

The Band of HM Royal Marines left the cold of Portsmouth behind to provide entertainment and a bit of Christmas cheer for their comrades during a lightning visit as 2008 drew to a close.

But there was also time for reflection on the sacrifices made by Britons in ousting Saddam Hussein's regime and attempting to bring peace in the aftermath of the 2003 campaign.

The band spent four days in

Iraq, performing at Basra airbase and a short distance away at Shaibah, another focal point of Britain's mission in this land.

One of the large mess halls in the airfield hosted a lively carol service.

"There's nothing quite like singing Christmas carols to the accompaniment of a full brass band," said Padre David Moss, the Joint Force Senior Chaplain at Basra.

"The Royal Marines Band brought tremendous spiritual encouragement to us all at Christmas."

Before the carol service, the Royal Marines had performed outside: a beat retreat in front of the headquarters and memorial wall which lists the names of all the Britons killed in Iraq since 2003.

Chief-of-Staff Col David King RM took the salute as British personnel marched past before the Union Flag was lowered at sunset.

Such ceremonies and others, says Maj Gen Salmon, are a constant reminder of the substantial Senior Service in Basra.

"From aircrew to storespeople to mechanical and weapons engineers to officers of every branch, the 'dark blue line' is broad indeed in Basra," the general added.

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SQUADRONS OF THE FLEET AIR ARM No.3

In the thrall of the mountain kings

WE'LL begin by stating the obvious.

Strictly speaking, HMS Gannet is not a squadron.

She's certainly not a ship. She is, however, the sole Fleet Air Arm presence north of the border.

And she's also the busiest Search and Rescue unit in this sceptred isle.

So we think she's more than worthy of inclusion here.

The current unit traces its history back to 1971 when the ninth Gannet was commissioned at Prestwick Airport.

Its focus then was not saving lives but hunting Soviet submarines; with the then new Polaris deterrent based just up the Forth of Clyde, Britain's ultimate insurance policy needed a little insurance of its own.

Three squadrons of anti-submarine specialists have called Gannet their home: the Flying Tigers of 814 NAS, 824 NAS and 819 NAS. The latter were the last to leave, decommissioning in 2001.

By that date, Search and Rescue – a vital, if ancillary, role in 1971 – had become Gannet's *raison d'être*. Indeed, in 2007 Gannet – not a satellite of 771 NAS, the Royal Navy's other dedicated Search and Rescue formation (a mistake we've made in these pages in the past) – conducted more rescue missions (357, with 349 people saved) than any other RN, RAF or Coastguard unit.

Both numbers jumped in 2008: 379 call-outs, 365 people assisted.

The latter invariably voice their appreciation through a string of thank-you letters, but there was also a flurry of awards for the unit in 2008 including the Firmin Sword of Peace for humanitarian work and the GAPAN Prince Phillip Helicopter Rescue of the



Copenhagen 1807
Walcheren 1809
Suakin 1888
Atlantic 1943-45

Aircraft: Westland Sea King HU Mk5
Engines: 2 x Rolls-Royce Gnome 1400-1 Turboshafts (generation 1,400 shp apiece)
Rotor Span: 62ft (18.8m)
Length: 57ft 2in (17.4m)
Speed: 125 knots
Crew: 4 (2 x pilot, 1 x observer, 1 x aircrewman)
Endurance: in excess of five hours
Sensors: Search radar transponder IFF and radar altimeter

Facts and figures

Year title.

Down the years, Gannet's crews have grabbed the headlines for their work in major disasters such as Lockerbie and Piper Alpha.

But day-in-day out it's the 'ordinary' lifesaving which is Gannet's 'bread and butter'.

Fifteen years ago, the Sea Kings were scrambled once every two days on average.

Today, they're airborne daily on rescue missions.

The unit's domain stretches from Ben Nevis in the north, east to Edinburgh, south to the Isle of

Man and Cumbria, and westwards 200 miles off the west coast of Ireland – 98,000 square miles in all, covered by three aircraft.

Actually, covered by two aircraft: one is at immediate notice to fly, another is at lower readiness, the third is undergoing an extensive overhaul.

And although this is a naval unit and the sea comprises a sizeable chunk of its domain, 'wet jobs' are dwarfed by 'dry jobs' – most around Ben Nevis and Glencoe.

Take October last year for example: 30 call-outs in all, barely

half a dozen involved saving life at sea.

There was, nevertheless, plenty of saving life: road accident casualties, pregnant women ferried to hospital, fishermen plucked from rivers and lochs engulfed by floods, a horse rider thrown off her animal.

All of which is a far cry, unsurprisingly, from the beginning of Gannet's lineage back in 1800: a sloop which saw action in the North Sea and Baltic during the Napoleonic Wars.

Gannets II and III, both sloops, served in the Americas and

Mediterranean respectively in the mid-19th Century.

The fourth Gannet is undoubtedly the most famous; an 1878 barque which saw action against the Mahdi's forces in the Sudan campaigns. Renamed, she would eventually serve as a drill ship on the Thames, HMS President. Restored to her original moniker, she is now preserved in Chatham.

Gannet V and VI were a tender and gunboat respectively. VII too was a gunboat, serving on the China Station from the late 1920s until she was transferred to the

Chinese Navy in 1942.

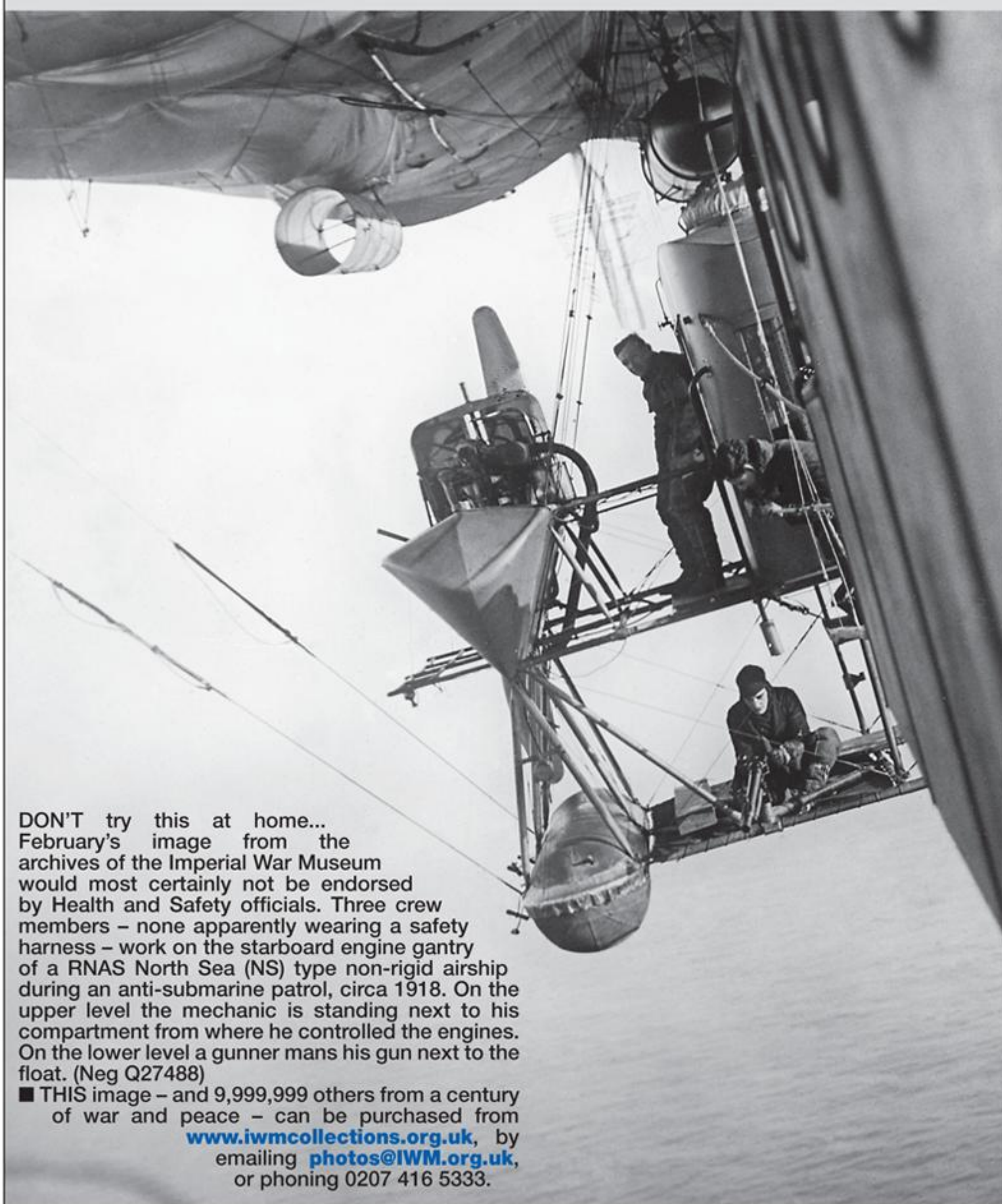
The Fleet Air Arm ties with Gannet began in 1943 when the RAF airfield at Eglinton in Northern Ireland transferred to RN control.

The air station played its part in the latter stages of the Battle of the Atlantic and continued to serve the Fleet Air Arm until it was closed in the spring of 1959.

● (Above) Sea King Rescue 708 sweeps over the Scottish countryside during a training mission

Picture: WO1 Ian Arthur, FRPU Clyde

photographic memories



DON'T try this at home... February's image from the archives of the Imperial War Museum would most certainly not be endorsed by Health and Safety officials. Three crew members – none apparently wearing a safety harness – work on the starboard engine gantry of a RNAS North Sea (NS) type non-rigid airship during an anti-submarine patrol, circa 1918. On the upper level the mechanic is standing next to his compartment from where he controlled the engines. On the lower level a gunner mans his gun next to the float. (Neg Q27488)

■ THIS image – and 9,999,999 others from a century of war and peace – can be purchased from www.iwmcollections.org.uk, by emailing photos@iwm.org.uk, or phoning 0207 416 5333.

HEROES OF THE ROYAL NAVY No.58

Lt Cdr Eric Robinson VC

THE knock-out blow. How often have politicians and military leaders sought to deliver it – and how often have they sought to deliver it cheaply.

In the winter of 1914-15 with the armies of the Entente and the Central Powers deadlocked on the Western Front, one glittering prize seemed tantalisingly within reach to Paris and London: Constantinople.

No-one was more tempted than Winston Churchill, First Lord of the Admiralty. Capture Constantinople, he reasoned, and the Ottoman Empire would fall.

It did not even require much of an army; it did, however, require a substantial naval presence to appear off the Golden Horn.

It was little more than 160 miles from the heart of Constantinople to the open waters of the Aegean.

But the road to Constantinople lay through the Dardanelles.

In peace, the Dardanelles were hazardous – a stretch of water three dozen miles long but no more than four miles wide (and just 1,300 yards across at the narrowest point).

In war, two dozen forts, a dozen minefields and a couple of anti-submarine barriers barred the way to the Sea of Marmara – and the road to Constantinople.

To open that road, the forts had to be neutralised.

It began inauspiciously in mid-February with a less-than-effective bombardment of the forts straddling the entrance to the strait.

On the southern tip of the Gallipoli peninsula stood the guns of Ertugrul and Seddulbahir, and little more than two miles away on the Asiatic shore were the forts of Kum Kale and Orhanie.

The guns of the battleships alone could not silence the Turkish forts. Demolition parties were also required.

On the afternoon of February 26, the obsolescent battleship HMS Vengeance put a party of 100 Royal Marines and sailors ashore near Kum Kale.

The Royals would deal with the guns around Kum Kale; the matelots, led by torpedo officer Lt Cdr Eric Gascoigne Robinson, would head to Orhanie and eliminate coastal and anti-aircraft batteries.

Eric Robinson had already distinguished himself in the Boxer Rebellion. Today he would enter the pantheon of military legend.

Almost immediately both parties became pinned down by Turkish fire.

Robinson told his men to take cover – dressed in white they were too easy a target for Johnny Turk, he explained.

The officer – also dressed in white – went on, alone, evading the fire of snipers, and found the guns unoccupied.

Gun cotton charges destroyed two of the weapons, but Robinson scurried back down the hill for a second charge to finish off the task while the guns of the battleships brought down an iron rain upon the Turkish positions.

Still Robinson was not done. Now he led his party to Orkanieh, blew up a 9.4in gun, then returned to the picket boats and back to the Vengeance.

In fact, Eric Robinson would demonstrate his fortitude under fire repeatedly during the bungled campaign. Four times he led a makeshift minehunter into the strait to clear the Turkish minefields, then commanded another demolition party dispatched (successfully) to scuttle the submarine E15 which had run aground.

That latter mission was worthy of Britain's highest award, but it was for the raid on Orkanieh that Eric Robinson was honoured.

The rather dry words of the citation fail to capture Robinson's bravery. Not so the words of a superior – who had not thought much of the officer beforehand.

"I am honestly lost in admiration for Robinson, he has done splendidly and I honestly am surprised," he wrote. "I did not think much of him as a First Lieutenant. But that evidently does not prevent him being an exceedingly brave man."





Montrose given a new 'brain'

HMS Montrose is the first ship in the Fleet to receive a new electronic 'brain', part of a wealth of new wizardry being fitted to the frigate during a £15m overhaul in Rosyth.

DNA(2) (no, we've no idea what that means either) is the latest version of the command system which drives a multitude of sensors and provides the ops room team with the most accurate information about friend and foe above, on and below the surface.

The new computer kit is based on a similar system which serves as the brains of the new Type 45 destroyers.

DNA(2) is not the only technological improvement Montrose will enjoy on the Forth during her refit. Around 12km (7½ miles) of cabling is being installed as part of an enhanced IT system which brings the frigate in line with the rest of the MOD.

Montrose is also receiving the next-generation of Seawolf, the Seawolf Mid-Life Update (or SWMLU), which effectively doubles the range at which the missile can engage incoming aerial threats.

Workers at Babcock will fit improved small calibre guns and generally spruce up the ship and her machinery following her exertions in the Gulf and Indian Ocean last year.

Genuine heroes – just a bit smaller

A TOY manufacturer is producing a new range of military figures – including a Royal Marines Commando – to fill a gap in the market.

Character Options said it is proud to unveil its new HM Armed Forces collection, which promises to "fill the significant void in the action figure market in recent years caused by the lack of authentic military-inspired toys."

The firm said military and camouflage clothing designs are a perennial favourite of devoted followers of fashion, and the men and women of the Armed Forces are also "inspirational figures to both adults and children alike".

With the Forces occupying a high-profile position in news bulletins on an almost daily basis – whether because of troops in battle in Afghanistan or individual successes such as that of gold medal-winning Olympic rower Lt Peter Reed – it is hoped the introduction of a range of accurate military figures will help cement the Forces' position in the spotlight.

Character has worked closely with the Royal Navy, Army and RAF to conceive and launch this range, aiming to strike a balance between traditional play patterns and authenticity.

The initial launch in the spring of 32 individual products will include three

hero 10in action figures for each Service, including a Royal Marine Commando.

The Army will be represented by a member of the infantry while the RAF provides a fast jet pilot.

Toy craft and vehicles representative of each force will include a Naval Service hovercraft which travels over land and water, a tank with a spring-powered gun and a Harrier jump jet.

The figures and vehicles will be joined by further collections which will take the range into other sectors such as games, dressing up, outdoor and role-play.

This will include key items that Character said "will take the survival and surveillance theme to another level."

Portraying the correct ethos of this new brand and its constituent services is vital, according to the manufacturer.

Accordingly, child psychologist Dr Amanda Gummer is working closely with the team to ensure that important themes such as a child's sense of team-work, belonging and identity are considered in the development of the range, whilst modern messages of anti-bullying, boundaries and discipline can also be seen to be reflected in play with the range.

Physical fitness will also feature in the overall concept. Finally, a dedicated website



will support all aspects of the launch, allowing visitors to download facts and figures on the Armed Forces and take part in games and challenges.

Commenting on the new collection, a spokesman from the Ministry of Defence said: "We are rightly proud to be

celebrating our Armed Forces through the production of these new action figures.

"These toys showcase our people and equipment and this commercial recognition proves the high level support for our forces among the British public."

Relatives sought as wrecks may be moved

THE wartime wrecks of ships which sank on the Thames could be moved as part of the major Gateway regeneration project.

And relatives of victims – including three Royal Navy ratings – are being sought to inform them of the plans and invite them to any subsequent memorial services.

The Historic Casualty Casework team of the Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre (JCCC) are tracing links to sailors from SS Storm (Guernsey) on September 9 1917 and SS Dynamo on April 17 1943.

In such cases the team works from the last known address of next of kin, although these can date back many decades.

The three RN men in the Dynamo were AB Thomas Conway (36), whose widow Mary Ann lived at 42 Garden Street, Ardwick, Manchester 12; AB Thomas Walton (20), whose parents John and Mary lived at 42 Sackville Street, Coventry; and LS Charles Leslie Moore (23), whose next of kin George and Annie Moore lived at 21 The Valley, Bemerton, Salisbury.

The others from Dynamo were 2nd Engineer Frank Herbert Barker (61), whose family friend Ms Hunter lived at 112 Selkirk Rd, Whitton, Middlesex; Donkeyman Thomas William Wall (21), whose wife Mrs E Wall lived at 7 Redvers Cottages, Kearsney Ave, Dover; Ch Eng Officer Arthur Sidney Morris, buried at East Ham (St Mary Magdalene) Churchyard; and 1st Officer Donald Louis McLaren, buried at Beverley (St Mary) Church Cemetery.

The three casualties from SS Storm were Mate Edwin Hawkins (35), next of kin Mary Hawkins (née O'Neil), 50 City Quay, Dublin; Ch Engineer Thomas Henry Taggart (40), next of kin Annie Evelyn Taggart (née Sayle), 29 Palatine Rd, Douglas, Isle of Man; and Fireman Robert Gray (59), born in Runcorn.

Any information should be passed to Sue Raftree at SPVA, JCCC, Historic Casualty Casework, Room 14, Building 182, Imjin Barracks, Gloucester GL3 1HW, email jccchistcasso3@spva.mod.uk

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On the twelve days of Christmas...



ON the twelve days of Christmas, HMS Portland gave to me: 12 lads a'leaping, 11 ladies RASing, ten WAFUs prepping, nine officers serving, eight boats a'boarding, seven chefs a'firefighting, six guys a'pulling, five green berets, four swimmers swimming, three PT sessions, two COs and a warship away at sea.

All right, for artistic licence we might well have played fast and loose with the numbers in that rendition. However it does give you a melodic idea of how busy HMS Portland has been over the festive period on patrol in the Gulf of Aden and around the Horn of Africa.

The frigate exited the Suez Canal at the end of November, and began her work with CTF 150 operating around the Red Sea before heading over to her regular patrol area.

Her role? The steadfast guardian of the seas, warning off narcotics and arms smugglers, watching out for people traffickers, and defending fellow vessels from the attacks of pirates.

Piracy is something of a forté for the men and women of HMS Portland, as they were the first to undergo an enhanced counter piracy training package from the FOSTies before they set off.

Boarding officer Lt Steve Patton said: "We have trained

hard to make sure that we can operate by day and night in most weathers and against all types of vessels – not only here in the Gulf of Aden but anywhere that the Royal Navy might be tasked to operate.

"The RN, along with other navies, plays a key role in keeping our seaways open for legitimate trade. Portland's boarding party is one small part of the team that makes this work."

With Christmas upon them, the tempo of life on board kept apace, with the ship maintaining her duties watching over the vessels and aircraft in her patch, ready for a call for help or rescue.

The traditional joys of Christmas Day – a carol service – were counterbalanced by some unusual activities – a hands to bathe followed by a barbecued Christmas lunch, served in good





ilian tradition by the on board.

lest anyone should be concerned by the CO Cdr Henry taking part in the singing session, please bear in mind that he was getting into the water as the most junior sailor on board while AB(Sea) Becky was enjoying the novelty of gold stripes upon her uniform.

For each member of the company were provided with a UK4U, we're told "in the form of a box full of very goodies".

The junior rates in the ship received a small gift of the residents of Barbican in Plympton.

Cdr Henry sent a message to the families and friends of the ship at home: "You will be surprised, but not surprised, to find that Portland is doing very well and has quickly made her amongst our friends and at home."

Not deterring piracy in the shipping routes to the west with the local navies' outposts and helping these difficult waters, the on board is doing their utmost to support our mission.

Christmas is, of course, a time of reflection and our lives will quite naturally turn on their heads. For some, Christmas has become a regular occurrence, for others this will

be their first time away from family and loved ones over the festive period; but regardless all will be taking time to think about those who are dearest to us.

"Knowing that we have your support as we carry out our duty remains a huge strength; so a heartfelt thanks for continuing to give us your support and encouragement."

Family and friends may be somewhat surprised by the return of rather svelte sailors at the end of Portland's eight-month deployment.

Everyone on board has signed up to a new fitness regime, where programme and weather permitting, they enjoy an hour of physical training three times a week.

The ship's physical training instructor, LPT Jules Stroud said: "It's a brilliant opportunity for the ship's company to keep fit and healthy in the fresh air, and to mingle with people outside of their normal working environment."

The PTI's efforts to keep the numerous men and women on board fit are bolstered by the green berets of the ship's RM detachment whose 'motivational skills' have proven a boon for some.

One man is training particularly hard during the patrol, although he'll be leaving the ship in April - CPO(CMEM) Nathan Sexon is earning increasing familiarity

with Portland's upperdeck as he trains for the London Marathon.

Seven complete laps of the deck amount to one mile, so for his full marathon the Chief Marine Engineering Mechanic will need to pass the same upper deck scenery some 183 times...

CPO Sexon admitted: "Training for a marathon at any time is hard, but the limitations of running on board a ship at sea has made it that much more difficult."

"Since November last year we have spent a lot of time at sea, so training days - although regular - have often been quite monotonous."

But the senior rate is running to raise money for a charity close to his heart - the Home Farm Trust in Bristol that offers services throughout the UK.

The money that he raises will go towards buying a new TV/DVD system for the house where his sister lives and will be available for use by all of the residents.

All of this hard operational work and disciplined off-watch time merited the crew with an operational stand-off at Abu Dhabi over the New Year, where the ship stocked up on stores and provisions, and the crew probably stocked up on a few stores too...

In Abu Dhabi the Naval frigate found herself berthed alongside

the Pakistan Naval Ship Tippu Sultan, the one-time HMS Avenger.

Crews from both ships enjoyed the chance to visit the other's ship.

Lt Cdr Mark Hocking, the Weapon Engineer Officer, said: "The ship has been extremely busy since leaving the UK, and it has been satisfying to see all the training we have done put into practice."

"We remain focused on our mission and despite being away from our families over the Christmas period, morale remains high."

He summed up: "It is clear to all on board that what we are doing is fundamental to ensuring the major maritime trade routes remain open to all nations."

● (Clockwise from top left) HMS Portland in the Suez Canal; hands to bathe, and Christmas carols on a rather sunny Christmas Day; a hard-fought tug of war on deck; time for a smile during a Red Sea RAS with RFA Wave Knight; the Lynx of Flight 426 is stowed; a Christmas Day dip for the CO; Portland's chefs (sorry, logisticians (catering services) get to grips with a fire drill; the RM boarding team return to the ship after checking out a dhow; fast-roping drills with the Lynx; and LPT Jules Stroud keeps Portland's men and women on their toes





● Lt Cdr Ian Brailey presents a MASF plaque to Mrs Diane Rudge, Home manager, at the Royal Star & Garter Home in Solihull

Massive support for Solihull home

TEN people from the Maritime Aviation Support Force (MASF) at RNAS Culdrose travelled up to Solihull to visit their affiliated charity, the newly-opened Royal Star & Garter Home.

Two COs of MASF – Lt Cdr Ian Brailey (outgoing) and Lt Cdr Tony Dunn (incoming) – led the group to visit their long-established associate.

MASF trace their links with the Royal Star & Garter back to the original Richmond home that opened in 1916.

Fundraising for the home is a regular part of the MASF HQ's annual events programme, with last year featuring a John O'Groats to Land's End sponsored run, with patron Simon Weston there to greet the weary runners as they crossed the finish line.

The Solihull home has recently

opened as an addition to the original Richmond Home, and plans are in hand to build a network of new homes in different parts of the country.

Find out more online at www.starandgarter.org.

Seeing pink

DESPITE a FOST grilling before setting out back to the Antarctic, the crew of HMS Endeavour determined to celebrate Think Pink day on board the survey ship with a sponsored head shave. As all funds were for Breast Cancer Campaign, it wasn't just the lads who had their locks shorn – particular credit to LOM Sally Green and LS Kerry Collins. All on board dug deep raising over £2,600 for the cancer charity.

Knees near miss for Tim

OVER IN America CPO Tim Jones spent months preparing to take on his first marathon only to have a knee injury almost take away his chance to run.

Tim (pictured below), a former ship's diver, and his oppo Lt Paul Hursthouse (right), a former clearance diver who has just completed training as a Senior Upper Yardman Warfare Officer, were committed to running the Richmond marathon in the US.

Tim said: "Personally it was

touch and go for me to run. My training was somewhat scuppered in early October.

"I was diagnosed with a knee problem and was forced to stop running."

However the senior rate, who is serving at the Headquarters of the Supreme Allied Commander Transformation, was determined to take on the marathon, and took advantage of excellent treatment from the US Navy's Physical Therapy department at Norfolk Naval Station.

The week before the race he finally managed to spend some time on the running machine.

"With the physio's green light, I was good to go. This was my first marathon so I am now able to speak from experience and say that 30 minutes running in four weeks prior to the marathon is definitely not the way to prepare."

"Paul was great to run with, he gave me the encouragement I needed when I started to hobble."

The two finished with a time of five hours 15 seconds, 50 minutes slower than their original pre-injury target.

"Paul, I feel, could have gone a lot faster without the 'limping old chief' bringing up the rear."

"Considering two weeks before I was barely able to jog 200 metres, so I felt my physios had done me proud."

However Tim kept himself running with one focus – "I could not help but think of our seriously injured servicemen and women and what they would give to be able to run 26.1 miles unaided. Enough said."

The charities that the men chose to support were Help for Heroes, Seafarers UK and the Demelza Children's Hospice.

Tim admits that his inspiration for running in the first place was the story of Mne Mark Ormrod,



which reminded him of his time in Afghanistan.

"I served in Op Herrick in 2007, and sadly saw too many of our boys killed or badly wounded – but remain fiercely proud of the work our men and women are doing in that region."

"The Royal Navy and Royal Marines are playing their part in spades."

"Although I have never met him, Mne Ormrod's bravery and determination are humbling and serve to remind us all of the incredible spirit within the UK military."

"It is impossible not to have respect for such a fine young serviceman."

If you would like to support the runners, you can pledge to your preferred charity through (Seafarers UK) www.justgiving.com/timjones33; (Help for Heroes) www.justgiving.com/timjones32; (Demelza Children's Hospice) www.justgiving.com/timjones34.

news in brief

■ AN INDOOR rowing competition in Gosport's Royal Navy Submarine Museum raised £3,000 for Help for Heroes. Fifty people from various medical establishments in mixed teams of ten took up the challenge, which was won by a tri-Service team from Fort Blockhouse Gymnasium, led by PTI Staff Sgt Issy Parfitt and featuring Naval MA Laura Thomosson.

■ AT Bickleigh Barracks, home of 42 Commando RM, Falklands veteran Maj Gen Nick Vaux DSO received a cheque for £1,000 from Royal Marine Plymouth Lodge 9528, making a grand total of £3,000 raised by the Lodge towards helping injured Royals on their return to the UK.

■ THE British Forces Foundation was the winner of the 2008 Charity Times Awards. The BFF arranges morale-boosting visits of big-name entertainers to troops serving all around the world, including the front lines of Afghanistan and Iraq. The charity manages all this solely through public donations.

The award judges said: "They have shown great leadership in presenting effectively to the public the message of being proud of the work of our troops in the face of an unpopular war in Iraq."

■ A CHARITY auction at Devonport Naval Base raised more than £4,000 for Help for Heroes. Prizes for the auction and raffle were donated by local businesses and from further afield, including signed sports memorabilia and an overnight stay at Rick Stein's restaurant in Padstow.

WO Mac McLaughlin said: "We were absolutely delighted to raise over £4,300 for this charity, as our initial target was £1,000. We would like to thank all the people who helped and donated prizes to enable us to have an exceptional response and turnout for the event."

■ THE staff, Naval and civilian, in Portsmouth enjoyed the benefits of fresh baking at the Macmillan Cancer Relief's Biggest Coffee Morning events last year, with Navy Command HQ on Whale Island netting £420.63, and the Portsmouth Naval Base HQ topping them with £715.79.

■ MOD communications provider Paradigm have donated £10,815 to Help for Heroes, including money garnered from a charity dinner evening and sponsorship of the Rugby Challenge Match in September.

■ FORMER Serviceman Michael Bawtree set up a theatrical show in November about the seizure of the Pegasus Bridge in Normandy at the start of D-Day. Money raised from the event went to new charity Project 65, which split among the Royal British Legion, Army Benevolent Fund, RAF Benevolent, BLESMA, St Dunstan's and Help for Heroes.

■ MEN from the Royal Marines Reserve based at HMS Caledonia, Rob Tansley, Phil Horey and Josh Bakker-Dyos, joined with staff from the Virgin Active healthclub in Edinburgh to complete a sponsored row in aid of Help for Heroes and in honour of the men of 45 Commando.

Organiser of the event Kay Burry said: "As someone who is going through the Royal Navy recruitment process, the work that Help for Heroes does is something that is very close to my heart. I felt it was time that I gave something back to the extraordinary men and women who are currently serving and making huge sacrifices on our behalf." Pledge your support at www.justgiving.com/kayburrysponsoredrow.

■ THE NPFS Social Work team at HMS Nelson decided to do something a little bit more creative when it came time for their annual team build. The whole group jumped at the chance of a makeover for a local primary school. And so the team headed off to Saxon Shore Primary School in Paulsgrove to bring a fresh look to their Music and Drama Room.

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Picture: LAPhot Emily Chambers

Cornwall bound

A RUN and cycle from Plymouth to Falmouth by 26 sailors from frigate HMS Cornwall raised £4,000 for Help for Heroes.

The teams of runners and cyclists rattled collecting tins on their 70-mile route through Torpoint, Crafthole, Seaton, Polperro, Pentwyn, Tregony, Penryn and Falmouth.

One of the event organisers, S/Lt Ellen Shephard, said: "All team members completed their allocated stages with many doing additional stages, surpassing their own expectations – some even ran over 30 miles a day."

"We received positive support from the local community, who cheered us on whilst adding money to our collection tins. Thankfully the weather was kind to us, even though the terrain and hills of Cornwall were not."

"Although the event was extremely challenging, everyone who took part had a great sense of achievement as they completed the event and all had a thoroughly good time."

A tale of seven Severns

THREE men from HMS Severn will be climbing on to their bicycles, as *Navy News* went to press, to begin a 300-mile coastal cycling route from Penzance to Portsmouth – all raising money for the RNLI.

The Naval Severn is affiliated with the RNLI and specifically her Severn-class lifeboats. This link means that the cyclists – Lt Simon Yates, Lt Roland Wilson and S/Lt Charles Thornton – will be paying visits to the six Severn-class boats stationed between Penzance and Portsmouth: Pendeen, Falmouth, Plymouth, Torbay, Weymouth and Yarmouth; before meeting their seventh Severn, their own ship, in Portsmouth.

CO Lt Cdr Steve Moorhouse said: "The RNLI is an outstanding charitable organisation that saves hundreds of lives at sea every year. I am extremely proud that Severn is associated with the Institute."

● Jingle bells, jingle bells, divers haul the sleigh, oh what fun it is to ride to make sick children's day...

Picture: LAPhot Alex Knott



Santa's stic voyage

ISN'T Santa supposed to fly? At night? On Christmas Eve? Then pop down chimneys?

And aren't Rudolph and Co supposed to be hauling him?

Well, yes, but 14 RN divers decided to give the reindeers a break and pull Santa and his sleigh (frogmen have many special powers, the ability to defuse bombs chiefly; but flight is not among them) through the heart of Portsmouth.

What was once a diving trolley became Santa's sleigh (complete with RN logo), several divers donned reindeer 'uniform' and then began the long haul from the Fleet Diving Squadron's home on Horsea Island to St Mary's Hospital in Fratton.

Crammed into the sleigh were a good £500 of presents donated by the Horsea Island good eggs and Santa, aka former mine clearance diver Mike Martin from Fareham; he's wheelchair-bound as a result of a waterskiing accident 20 years ago and now devotes much of his time to fundraising courtesy of wheelchair marathons.

It's about half a dozen miles from the divers' base to the children's ward at St Mary's. Driving it should take no more than 20 minutes.

It took Santa and his not-so-little helpers an hour and a half via a slightly circuitous route (for safety reasons) through Paulsgrove, Cosham, Hilsa and North End to

reach their destination.

And all the way they were encouraged by the Pompey public, who honked horns, waved at the sleigh pull, and offered to donate to the rather exhausted reindeer.

The reception at St Mary's was just as warm.

"It was just lovely," said matron's secretary Bridget Dilley. "The children were thrilled with their gifts – a wonderful array of presents: cameras, dolls, computer games, bicycles and the like."

"The parents were so happy to

see the divers – and the children loved it too. Thank you so much to the Navy for making this happen."

Organiser CPO Sean Meleady, of Fleet Diving Unit 3, added: "It was a real pleasure to bring some happy smiles to the children."

"The support and goodwill from the community was excellent as we made our way through the city."

"We really enjoyed the fitness training too, something we need to do regularly in our line work."



IN among a sea of Santas can be found AFCD manager CPO Chris Farrell with daughter Kotty (who joins the Navy this April) and son Yan at the Southsea Santa 5km Fun Run in aid of the RNLI.

Chid's Chariots chase charity cheer

THE RUNNING team of minehunter HMS Chiddingfold were told: "Chariots, I've entered us into a little race. It's called the Bahrain Marathon Relay."

A startled silence was followed by the inevitable question "Do we get a free T-shirt?", then the prompt volunteering of 15 amateur runners to tackle the 16-leg relay run at the Formula One race track. Which meant that someone would be running twice.

The Chid Chariots had just six weeks to get themselves ready for their run, four weeks of which were at sea on operations in a ship not ideally suited to running training.

The Bahrain Marathon Relay consists of 16 legs of about three kilometres, and is organised by the Bahrain Round Table to raise money for local charities.

The running team featured all the ship's officers, dive team and members of the mine warfare, engineering and communications department, led by the Chid's coxswain PO(D) Brian 'Billy the Whiz' Bounds – who also had the honour of being the man to do the double run.

The day of the race dawned to a breakfast of

scrambled eggs, bananas and ibuprofen (apparently there were some pre-race celebrations), then an hour-long bus ride before the Naval runners arrived at the track to see their competitors. Who they realised had benefited from far more training than they, and were decked out in all the latest running gear.

After a long and hot 16 legs, the team finished with an overall time of three hours 48 minutes, and to their surprise placed 45 out of 180 teams.

The runners – worthy of listing due to the legendary 'Q Shillingford' nature of their nicknames – are: Lt Cdr Matt 'The Menace' Dennis (CO); Lt Anthony 'The Whirlwind' Wallace (XO); Lt Charlie 'Chase me' Wheen (Ops); Lt John-Paul 'The Crane' Fitzgibbon (Navs); Lt Chris 'Big Guns' Vincent (Gunnery); Stephen 'Lumbering Lanny' Watkyns (DMEQ); PO Dougie 'Doug Dastardly' Seaman (Bosun); PO Robert 'The Rabbit' Mosley; LS(D) Simon 'The Wise Tortoise' Day; LS(CIS) Kevin 'Crazy Legs' Peggie; AB(D) Danny 'The Torque' Tolhurst; AB(D) Danny 'Puss in Boots' Kelly; AB(D) Simon 'Asterix' Jones; AB(CIS) Stu 'Catch me if you Can' Connor – and of course, the team's leader 'Billy the Whiz' Bounds.

Making Phil a million

NAVAL personnel across the nation and beyond have been putting themselves to the test as part of Operation 86400, helping an injured colleague reach his goal of raising £1 million for Help for Heroes.

Phil's Millions has been set up by Maj Phil Packer RMP, who is now paraplegic and confined to a wheelchair after a rocket attack in Iraq in February 2008.

Lt Cdr Brian Chittick and Lt Nic Vines both served with Maj Packer in Iraq, and set up the event from Devonport – the task to run continuously on a treadmill for 24 hours.

Lt Cdr Chittick explained: "There are many moving stories of courage emanating from Iraq and Afghanistan, and it makes you more aware of everyone's vulnerability when someone you are serving with comes home injured."

"Phil's efforts and determination are an inspiration to all of us."

Lt Vimes added: "The name of the event was chosen as a reminder that there are 86,400 seconds in a day, but for those serving on operations dramatic, life-changing events can happen in just a few of those seconds."

The Drake team, Drake Divas, was captained by PO Julie Williams, whose husband, a former Royal Marine colour sergeant, was injured in Afghanistan in 2007.

PO Williams said: "Many people are affected by the present conflicts. For me that includes family and friends."



● The Heron Hillbillies: Dental officers Tom Foulger, Laura Daniel, Mel Oura, with Dental Assistants Katherine Knott, Natalie Evans, Mags Taylor-Brown, and Katie Hogg and Barbara Mahon

"To be involved in Operation 86400, I feel, is a privilege and I really hope that people will support us."

Along the south at RNAS Yeovilton it was the Dental Department who clambered on to the treadmill for the 24 hour running challenge.

The Heron Hillbillies were led by Senior Dental Surgeon Cdr Mel Oura, raising £1,500 during their full day and night of running.

And further east again at HMS Sultan, POPT Nick Kent talked six of his colleagues from Sultan's PT staff into taking up the challenge in support of their

wounded colleagues. And at Collingwood LPT Darren West did the same job, raising £875.

Maj Packer's stated aim is to reach his goal of £1 million before he tackles the London Marathon in April this year walking on calipers and crutches over a three-week period.

He is determined that his life-changing experience should be used to make positive differences to other people's lives. He quotes Winston Churchill: "We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give."

Pledge your support online at www.justgiving.com/philsmillion.

Stretching a point



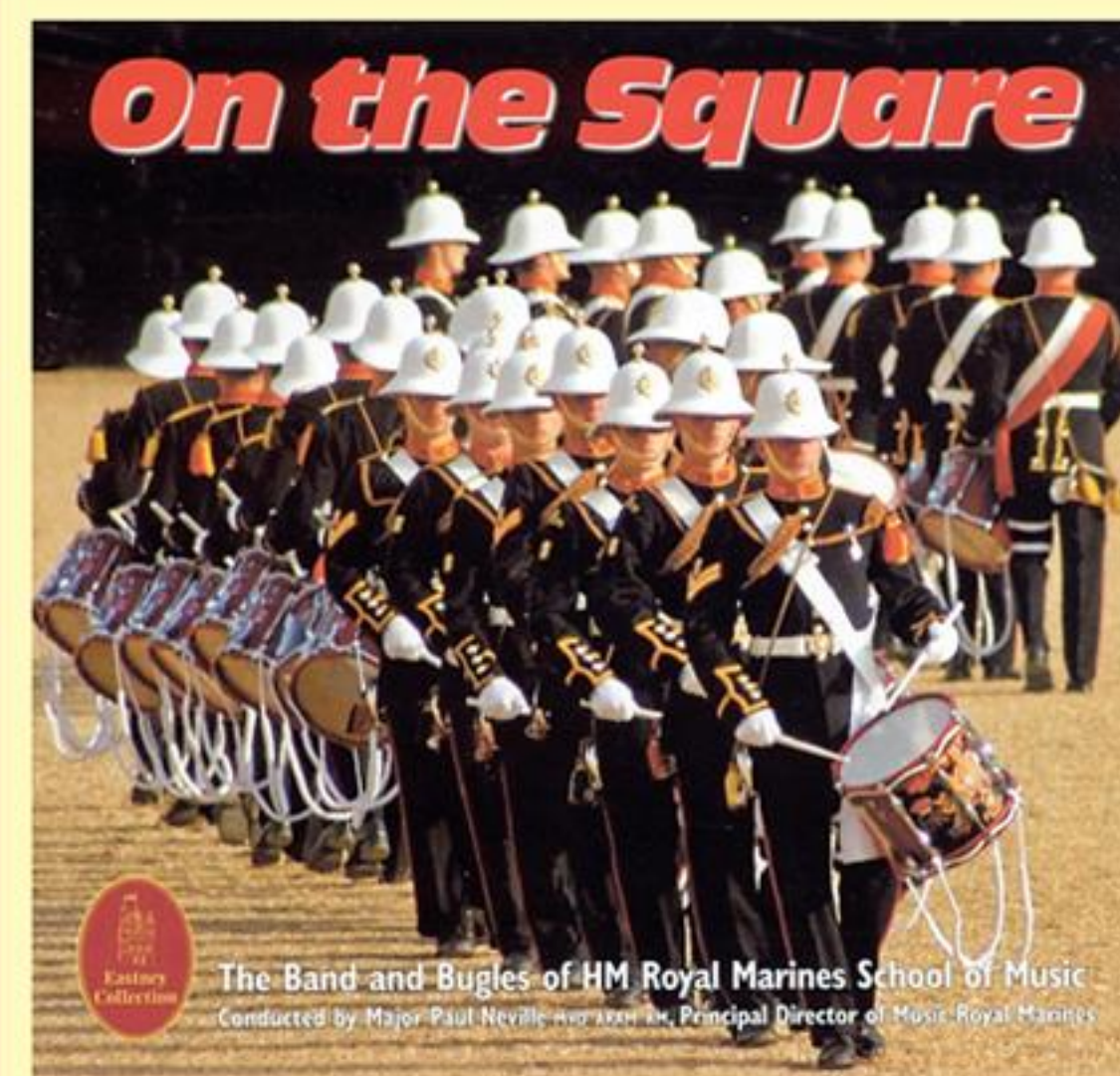
THREE men from HMS Edinburgh – Lt Colin Marshall, PO Andy Gibbs and PO John Charlesworth – walked from Glasgow to Edinburgh for Help for Heroes.

During the walk they carried a stretcher to symbolise the wounded returning from action, collecting money as they passed through.

Lt Marshall said: "Men and women are putting

their lives on the line on a daily basis. The charity Help for Heroes has been set up to ensure that if they get injured, they are provided with the best available care."

Their CO Cdr Gavin Young said: "This is an incredible achievement, and I would like to thank all those in Scotland who contributed towards the total."



On the Square: the Band of HM Royal Marines School of Music

(23 tracks, 69 mins)

Included on this album of popular marches to set the feet tapping and pulse racing are: When the Saints Go Marching In, Sussex by the Sea, Thunderbirds (the film Music), The Little Bugler, Swing Along, Light of Foot, Royal Standard, The Mad Major, Glorious Victory, Fame and Glory, Best Foot Forward, Sons of the Brave, With Sword and Lance, Men of Music, My Regiment, Drum Majorette, Birdcage Walk and On the Square. Plus Fanfare and Sunset of course – and the recording here is particularly fine.

Major Paul Neville conducts

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● Cdr Mike Goldthorpe and supporters

Picture: Cpl Ralph Merry RAF

Clocking up Rock miles

DECEMBER brought a challenge to Cdr Mike Goldthorpe of Headquarters British Forces in Gibraltar – he climbed the equivalent height of Mount Everest scaling to the top of the Rock 21 times, some 9,030 metres.

Mike said: "One in two men is affected at some time or another by prostate cancer. And this was my own mountain to climb, my own way of putting something back into the two charities which helped me when I needed it."

Mike has raised £5,000 for each of two charities for their support in his recover: Prostate UK and the Prostate Cancer Charity.

On his final ascent of the Rock on December 18, Mike was joined by over 20 colleagues and friends who climbed with him to the top of Med Steps, where they held a raffle as a final act towards his fundraising.

Hats off to Peaks race

SAILORS from HMS Sultan doffed a variety of headgear while raising money for people with learning disabilities and tackling the Three Peaks Challenge.

Within the 24-hour time

Jungly jolly

JUNGLE Sea King squadron 845 NAS enjoyed the festive spirit to hold an evening's entertainment in aid of the Guide Dogs for the Blind and Help for Heroes.

The evening with a Grand Christmas Draw at Yeovil Town Football Club raised £516.80 for both charities.

Days earlier the CO of the Commando Helicopter Force, Col John McCordle, presented a cheque for £838 to Help for Heroes.

Liz Cobbett, who works with CHF, said: "The Junglies have raised a considerable amount of money for a variety of charities over the years, but as three of our four Naval Air Squadrons that make up CHF are currently stationed in Afghanistan, we thought the Help for Heroes campaign was very appropriate."

The money was raised during the annual CHF Families Day at their home base of RNAS Yeovilton.

Meanwhile elsewhere in Yeovilton, the base's CO Cdre Chris Palmer formally opened the new Haven community room at the Tall Trees community centre.

The commodore thanked the Royal British Legion for the donation of £2,500 and the Debut Community Team for the new bright and functional meeting place for the community.

Punching high

THE two halves of the country were united by the commanding officer of HMS Puncher, Lt Tim Leeder, and his wife Dr Madeline Hopwood, who together ran both the Great North and the Great South Runs to raise funds for the RNLI.

Lt Leeder said: "The weather could not have been more of a contrast. The hard undulating course of Newcastle and South Shields brought with it a scorcher, making hydration and continual water intake essential."

"The beautiful south course was run in torrential wind and rain; I am sure trying to make up for the fact that it is almost completely flat."

Adorned in the colours of RNLI, the officer and his wife raised over £1,000.

limit, Lt Tom Dorman, Lt Mark Collins, CPO Dicky Byers, S/Lt Jim Aston, Lt Paul Bastiaens, PO 'Tyne' Weir and LMEA Ben Russell just scraped in with a total time of 23 hours 41 minutes, raising £371 for Hamilton House's charitable trust fund.

Lt Dorman said: "We kept a good sense of humour throughout, as we wore our silly summit hats at the top of each peak for team photographs. It certainly brought some laughter from the other climbers, and helped bring a sense of fun in what were grim weather conditions for this arduous and physically demanding challenge."

Lt Collins, whose wife Jenni is staff nurse at Hamilton House, added: "Most of us had been doing field gun training anyway, and we'd also taken part in the MS Challenge in the summer, so were quite a fit team to start with. But it was still hard work, made worse by wind and rain."

"We couldn't take that many photographs because the camera got waterlogged..."

Juno in flight

FORMER Naval man Peter Sherston-Baker was one of 12 ex-Servicemen, all of whom are missing a limb, who raced from the Cape Verde Islands to Bridgetown, Barbados.

The amputees were crewing the Spirit of Juno in the Ondeck Transatlantic Race, on behalf of BLESMA (the British Limbless Ex-Servicemen's Association).

Ernie Stables of the charity said: "Events of this nature are of great importance to the rehabilitation of our members as they place both physical and mental demands on them."

"We strive to prove that no challenge is beyond their capabilities following their horrific injuries."

As his boat began to close on its target, Peter sent this message back to the UK: "We are fast approaching Barbados now with 160 miles left to run."

"Last night the Atlantic showed us its teeth again with squalls and heavy seas forcing us to bear north. Juno had a tango with a ship that passed in the night – lights were seen and evasive action taken!"

"Dolphins appeared yesterday. Morale is high, the sky is blue and wind-speed is 22 knots."

Find out more on the BLESMA website www.blesma.org.

Bulwark's in good voice

IT WOULDN'T be Christmas without a bit of snow.

Okay, so normally it's blowing a hoolie and chucking it down over the festive season.

But just for once, the gods were kind and the snow fell upon amphibious flagship HMS Bulwark as she hosted a unique Christmas carol concert.

With 2008 drawing to a close, the assault ship headed to North Shields on the Tyne to visit her affiliates. (Although some of her company chose a slightly different means of transport – more later.)

Bulwark is bonded with the County of Durham and as she cannot reach the county town, the mountain came to Mohammed.

More than 400 guests from across the county gathered in the ship's vehicle deck, normally home to Royal Marines and all their kit, for the service led by the Right Reverend Dr Tom Wright, Lord Bishop of Durham.

His son, Dr Julian Wright, co-ordinated the music and kindly offered Durham singers to add much needed gravitas and harmony to the sailors and Royal Marines' enthusiastic efforts.

"The carol service was without doubt an incarnational moment in the history of this complex ship, and an occasion of grace that offered a brief oasis in a busy but rewarding programme," said Bulwark's chaplain Rev Mike Hills.

The ship counts Durham County, the Bishop of Durham, Forest of Teesdale Primary School, Trinity School (Durham), Harbour Lodge Care Home (Durham), Aycliffe Young Offenders Institute (Durham), numerous Cadet Forces and Bishop Auckland Hospital among her affiliates.

For Trinity School, the carol service was particularly special as the ship gave the final £800 required to buy a new minibus for their children.

The minibus, adapted for the



special needs of the school's pupils, will be in service shortly.

"We have a special relationship and friendship with Trinity School and we couldn't be more pleased to 'top off' the bid for a minibus. We look forward to hearing of the children's exploits and travels," said PO Mike Hopwood, the liaison officer for the affiliation with the school.

And those who chose a different means of transport? Well, the Royal Marines, of course. Thirteen members of the ship's assault squadron 4ASRM chose to cycle the 495 miles from the ship's home port of Devonport to Durham.

Stopping at various towns and cities along the way during their eight-day journey, the cyclists scoured the municipalities for donations, collecting some £10,000 for Help for Heroes.

Mne Luke Salter said: "I lost two friends in Afghanistan: Scotty Summer in Op Herrick 5 and Josh Howell in Op Herrick 6. I am doing this for them, and to raise awareness for the lads out there serving at the moment."

Meanwhile on board the assault ship, sailors and Marines undertook a different challenge organised by

Lt Dave Lee – running 192 miles (the circumference of the county) on the ship's running machines, mostly...

The last three miles were run for real into Durham city centre by members of the ship's company – including the ship's new commanding officer Capt Wayne Keble – where cyclists and runners met up for the final mile.

The leader of Durham County Council, Cllr Len O'Donnell, said: "These two tremendous fundraising efforts are typical of the activities through which the ship has raised thousands of pounds for its adopted charities."

At a reception on board ship Cllr O'Donnell presented the ship with the Chairman's Medal in recognition of its fundraising efforts, the highest honour in its adopted county.

And finally, running is a popular fundraising theme on board the assault ship.

Mark Ramage 'press-ganged' 45 of his shipmates, including the ship's then CO Capt Jeremy Blunden and chaplain Rev Tim Wilkinson, to complete a fancy dress run of 15 laps around the upper deck for Sport Relief, netting £167 for the cause.



● HMS Ark Royal's CO Capt John Clink sees off the Magnificent Seven riders: PO Garry Holgate, WO1 Paddy Lecky, MAA Joe South, CPO Nick Downs, PO Robbie Robertson, LET Mike Lucas and LAH Jessie James; supported by CPO Jim Phillips and AH James Arrowsmith

Picture: Gregg Macready

Ark basks in magnificence

WHEN carrier HMS Ark Royal set out to Gibraltar last year, her motorcycle club set out to make the 1,600-mile journey through southern France, over the Pyrenees and through Spain to meet their ship.

The 'Magnificent Seven' bikers and their two support crew chose to spurn the comforts of

carrier life in favour of fundraising for the Royal British Legion's Poppy Appeal.

Despite November weather and mechanical breakdown, the bikers completed their odyssey to meet the ship in Gibraltar at the end of eight days. Their efforts and endurance netted some £3,000 for the RBL.

BRNC opens charity chest

AS THE last days of 2008 drew to a close, money raised by Officer Cadets at Britannia Royal Naval College was distributed among local charities.

Thirteen different organisations benefited from shares of the £4,332.61 raised by cadets over the past term.

CO Cdre Jake Moores said: "Each term the college opens its charity chest and makes donations. Many of the fundraising activities undertaken by the cadets require them to use their initiative, leadership and teamworking skills."

Beneficiaries include: Calvert Trust; Children's Hospice South West; Dartmouth Hospital; 1st Dartmouth Scout Group; Dartmouth Caring; Townstal Action Group for Children; Bidwell Brook School; the Dartmouth Christmas Illuminations; Guide Dogs for the Blind; Shelterbox UK; RBL; SSAFA; and Help for Heroes.

appeals to you

■ A GROUP of bikers braved the winter chill to raise awareness of Push for Freedom, an organisation set up by former and current service personnel, dedicated to helping injured servicemen and women with their social and recreational needs.

They are planning a number of events to raise funds for the non-profit organisation to pass on to those it wants to help. During D-Day anniversary week, a 150-mile hand/bicycle ride will take place in Normandy. And members of the team will attempt to kayak across the Channel starting from Portsmouth's D-Day Museum.

For further information and to get involved, visit www.push2freedom.co.uk.

■ A COLLECTION point for used stamps has been set up at the MT Ops Garage in Portsmouth Naval Base. Old stamps will be turned into funds for the Naomi House Children's Hospice. If cutting out the stamps, please leave the stamp intact with a border around it. Send contributions to: Jill Bennett, MT Admin, MT Garage Building 3/5, PP44, HM Naval Base Portsmouth, PO1 3HH.

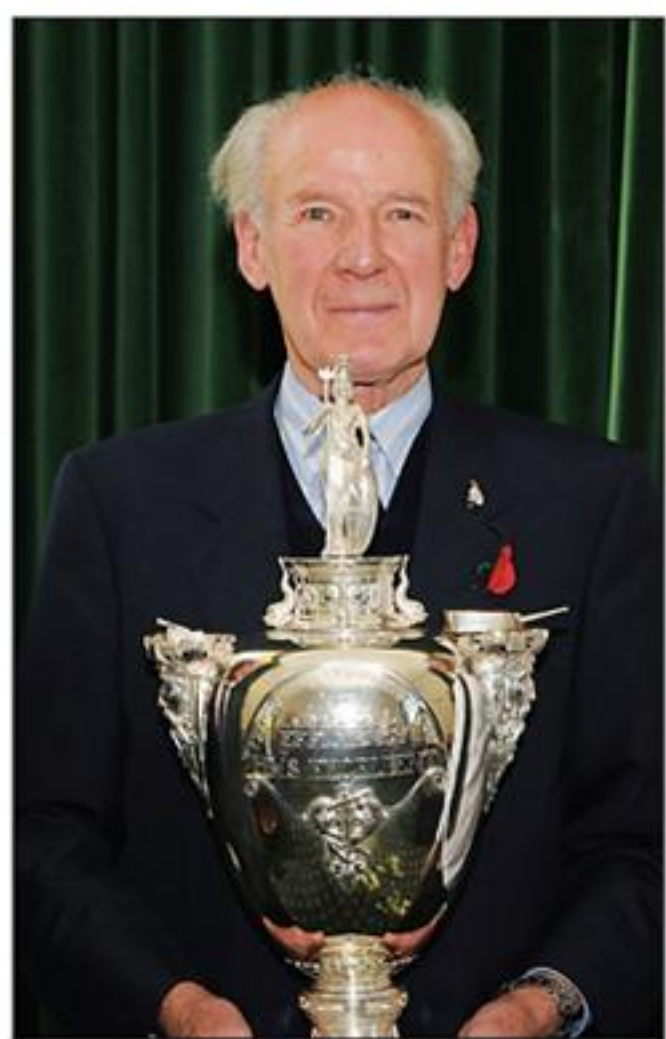
■ FUTURE Naval officer Andy Bailey, who currently works at Agusta Westland in Yeovil, has taken an unusual approach to improving his fitness before arriving at Britannia Royal Naval College.

He plans to cycle 4,000km solo across Australia from Sydney to Perth, raising money for UNICEF. You can track his progress at www.sydne-to-perth-2009.blogspot.com, or pledge your support by writing to: AWASA, Box 97, AgustaWestland, Lysander Road, Yeovil, Somerset, BA20 2YB.

■ A BLACK Tie Ball is being arranged for March 29 at the Royal Marines Museum in Southsea in aid of Help for Heroes. Tickets cost £45 each, and music will be provided by the Royal Marines Dance Band. Tickets are available from palmereventsplanning@hotmail.com.

■ THE Mission to Seafarers has announced the return of the Tour Pour La Mer 2009 in September this year. Five hundred riders will ride from Antwerp to Amsterdam, via Rotterdam, with all money raised going to the seafarers' charity. If you're interested in taking part, visit www.tourpourlamer.com.

■ FORMER LREM and ship's diver Malcolm 'Maggie' Lockwood, veteran of HMS Agincourt, Tiger and Eskimo, has burst into song along with his compatriots at the Kidderminster Male Choir in support of Help for Heroes. The choir has released a CD *Songs for Heroes*, which includes tracks that reflect the three Services as well as more traditional offerings. Each CD costs £10, and is available from their website at www.kidderminstermalechoir.co.uk.

awards
in brief

■ IT'S taken a little longer than usual for Robin Wynne-Jones to pick up his Top of Class trophy. Aged 18 Robin won the laurels in the Gunnery Officers' course – in 1944. But World War 2 and a swift deployment stopped him picking up his award.

But two years ago he tracked the trophy down to DE&S' Pockeridge Hodge Officers' Mess at Corsham where it was on loan; Cdr Paul Dowell, president of the Mess Committee, handed over the trophy to the now 82-year-old veteran.

Robin said: "What an impressive trophy it is. I consider myself extremely fortunate to have come through the war relatively unscathed."

■ WORLD War 1 veteran Henry Allingham, who joined the RNAS in 1915 as a mechanic, has been honoured by the Institution of Mechanical Engineers (IMechE).

President Bill Banks presented the 112-year-old with the President's Special Award for Outstanding Contribution and Achievements on behalf of the Engineering Profession.

Henry said: "Since entering the engineering profession I always hoped to become a chartered engineer, but when I was younger we just couldn't afford it."

"It's something I never thought would happen for me, so to receive this honorary certificate from IMechE is a lifetime's goal finally realised."

■ THE David Rowden Merit Award for maintaining first-class standards in catering has been awarded to the catering department of HMS Illustrious.

PO Neil Gates and LLogs Jonathan Barnes accepted the award on behalf of their department from Baroness Betty Boothroyd.

LLogs Barnes said: "The award was a surprise as we didn't know we had been entered, but we were proud to be nominated by our HODs (Heads of Department) as it shows their appreciation for our department's hard work throughout a busy year."

■ A SAILOR from HMS Cornwall, LS Stephen 'Spud' Murphy, has been awarded with the Army Achievement Medal from the US Army because of his exceptional service whilst with the Coalition Military Assistance Training Team.

His American commander in Baghdad sought the medal for him in recognition of his crucial work setting up an Iraqi Navy fast aluminium boat squadron. His work training and mentoring the Iraqis has enabled them to safeguard their own territorial waters.

■ BRNC cadet, Mid Alexandra Karavla has won a prestigious award from the UK Hydrographic Office for showing the most improvement, progress and potential in coastal navigation and bridge-watching skills while under training at Dartmouth.

Mid Karavla, who joins HMS Cornwall as a young officer this year, said: "I feel really honoured to have won this award. When I first started at BRNC I had no navigational experience at all but now I feel totally at home on the bridge."



● Ldg Diver Lee 'Duffs' Duffy



● Lt Cdr Neville Bryce

Crash couple thank 40 Cdo

A COUPLE caught up in a road traffic accident paid a call on the Royal Marines of 40 Commando to thank them for their help.

Janet and Robin Hammond's car crashed after a mechanical failure, but fortunately the Marines were returning from a training exercise with a military ambulance down the same road.

Driver Mne Kyle Forbes said: "It looked like a horrific crash and we were expecting serious casualties so I turned on the blue lights and forced my way through the traffic."

Capt Marty Adams added: "We took control of the scene and started taking stock, directing traffic and prioritising the injured."

One of the unit's medics, Mne Ryan Shelley, stepped forward to take care of the casualties: "My training took over, and I looked after everyone as best I could. I wrapped Mrs Hammond in my smelly sleeping bag that I'd been sleeping in for a week to keep her warm."

Mrs Hammond commented: "I don't know how I would have coped without his kindness." And her husband added: "Everything was whirling around my head and calm only descended when the Royal Marines arrived. They took care of everything so I could worry about my wife. It was a huge weight lifted from me."

The couple visited Norton Manor Camp to thank the Marines and make a donation to Help for Heroes as a way of showing their gratitude.



Heritage honour

THE heritage area of the RN Submarine School at HMS Raleigh has been dedicated to the memory of WO Coxswain Simon 'Jim' Slater, who died in August 2008.

Jim (pictured above) was instrumental in gathering artefacts for the site, and was awarded the MBE in 2002 in recognition of his enthusiasm and dynamism.

School CO Cdr Rob Dunn said: "Jim was an inspirational submariner who was widely respected by all those who were fortunate enough to know him."

THERE'S been recognition nationwide for the inspirational nature of personnel in the Naval service.

The Sun Military Awards, run by the red-top newspaper in association with the Ministry of Defence, lauds the excellence of the sailors, soldiers and airmen that make up the Armed Forces.

Guests of honour at the event were the Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall who saw the awards given to the men and women in the military and their supporters who make such a difference.

Senior Service winners include Able Seaman (Diver) Jamie Campbell, who took the laurels for Best Recruit, the Royal Marine Armoured Support Group of Yeovilton, who are the True Grit Group; and Leading Seaman (Diver) Lee Duffy of Northern Diving Group at HMNB Clyde, who won the title for Most Outstanding Sailor or Marine.

His citation from his CO Lt Cdr Jason White reads: "During his time at Northern Diving Group, 'Duffs' Duffy has without a doubt been pivotal to the success of this extremely busy operational unit."

"A father of four young children he nevertheless puts himself forward for all and any deployed jobs in the UK or abroad and, with his huge experience, is one of the most capable Number 2 Bomb Disposal operators in the RN."

"His tireless enthusiasm and professional knowledge have been invaluable in maintaining the military capability that NDG provide in the UK."

Members of the judging panel included: former First Sea Lord Lord West, former RAF boss Air Chief Marshal Sir Peter Squires, Olympian Dame Kelly Holmes, actor Ross Kemp, footballer John Terry, Top Gear presenter Jeremy Clarkson, and notable others.

Another Naval man has received a high accolade as Lt Cdr Neville Bryce has been chosen as one of the top 20 black role models in the UK.

Neville, originally from a council estate in Bilborough, Nottingham, was regularly stopped by the police as a youth – it motivated him to join the Navy to leave behind such harassment.

Neville signed up as a marine engineering apprentice, and served on HMS Intrepid during the Falklands War. He joined the submarine service in 1986, was Chief of Boat on HMS Opportune in 1999, and was commissioned later in his career.

One of his schoolfriend's 18-year-old son was shot by a gang in London last year. Neville is committed to changing negative attitudes within ethnic communities.

He said: "I was thrilled to win my way through to becoming a top 20 black role model and hope that such recognition proves to aspiring young black men that the Royal Navy welcomes anybody who has the ambition to achieve a successful career, whatever their background."



Michelle goes up in the world

DIEGO Garcia's 12,003ft runway is very familiar to the Servicemen and women who stop there on their world travels. However it is also designated an emergency landing site for the Space Shuttle.

On January 13 NASA conducted a shuttle landing and crew rescue exercise on the island – as a birthday treat LLogs Michelle Snow (pictured above), who is one of the 42-strong team of British military stationed there, was designated Shuttle Pilot for the day so that the rescue teams could practise their drills.

Michelle, resplendent in real astronaut clothing, was removed from the 'shuttle' and decontaminated. She said: "I know the Navy gives plenty of opportunity for adventure, but I never expected to have a day as a NASA astronaut."



Family life in the RFA

WHEN the new head of the RFA, Cdre Bill Walworth RFA, paid a visit to HMS Raleigh, he presented end-of-course certificates to 13 Seamen Grade 2s trained at the base.

Among those was SG2 Kyle Chapman, whose mother Jayne is also undergoing training at Raleigh at the Defence Maritime Logistics School.

The commodore also met many of the other RFA personnel training and working at the Cornish establishment.

3/O Anthony Sincok RFA said: "Cdre Walworth's visit was a great opportunity to show off the training that new entrant seaman and logistics personnel receive at HMS Raleigh."

● Catering Assistant (Cook) Glenn Hartley RFA cooks up an omelette for his new boss



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● Pioneers of the RLC provided security during Joint Venture 08

Picture: Sgt Andy Carnall

For Cerney read Cyprus

THE population of RAF Akrotiri in Cyprus doubled in size late last year when Exercise Joint Venture 08 swung into action, writes Lt Jenny Coley RNR.

The biennial Joint Force command post exercise would normally see the RN Maritime Battlestaff (MarBatStaff), the Navy's high readiness expeditionary HQ, deploy to South Cerney in Gloucestershire.

But the desire to add a realistic scenario for deployed operations saw a ground-breaking move to southern Cyprus, where a further 1,000 or so other personnel helped form a joint Land, Air and Allied Rapid Reaction Corps HQ.

Based at Whale Island in Portsmouth, 42 core staff from the MarBatStaff were augmented by 36 personnel from across the RN and Maritime Reserves, including AWNIS (Allied Worldwide Navigation Information System), NCAGS (Naval Cooperation and Guidance for Shipping), Media Ops, Info Ops and the Air Branch, to form a 78-strong Maritime Component.

The primary aim of Joint Venture 08 was the interaction between the military HQ and its various components, with other Government departments and international and non-governmental organisations, including aid agencies.

Among the VIPs who visited the JFMCC (Joint Force Maritime Component Commander) was Armed Forces Minister Bob Ainsworth and Chris Porter of the Department for International Development.

The Joint Force Maritime Component Commander for the exercise, Cdre Duncan Potts, said: "As long as it is our defence policy to operate overseas at this scale, it is essential that we exercise that ability occasionally."

"JV08 has been an invaluable workout for the MarBatStaff, and in particular the opportunity to work to the Joint Force HQ and alongside our fellow components in the Air and Land forces."

The communications team arrived in Cyprus weeks earlier to start the set-up process.

"We were amongst the first in and will be the last out," said WO Michael O'Shaughnessy.

"We've got a significant amount of communications and information equipment to operate and only eight personnel and, despite being the smallest enabling group on JV08, we are proud to be the first component to get all our systems up and running."

Indeed, the amount of kit required to support the MCC is considerable.

"We have in the region of 110 clients to support here and have deployed



● Cdre Duncan Potts (left) presents AB Michael Head with a 'field conditions' birthday cake to celebrate his 20th birthday

Picture: CPO Duncan Wisbey

with a full helpdesk service supporting the variety of systems," explained PO Nigel Hogg.

"We've got a big footprint of equipment and we are working very closely with our colleagues in the Land and Air Components."

PO Mark Cheyne added: "This is the first time the MarBatStaff have deployed overseas into a field environment, and being in Cyprus has really tested our ability to operate away from home."

Throughout JV08 the food was a hot topic of conversation, but despite messing in field conditions, it was not the usual gripes – quite the reverse.

There was nothing but high praise for the excellent standards and variety of food on the menu provided by the RAF field kitchen, especially with daily curries added to accommodate the tastes of the Gurkha Signals Regiment.

One of the youngest members of the MCC, AB(WS) Michael Head of HMS Albion, celebrated his 20th birthday during JV08, and was presented with a "field conditions" birthday cake by the commodore.

Michael, a RN picture compiler who has previously deployed to the Baltic and Africa, said: "This is the first time I have been on such a large joint force exercise and it has been a great experience."

Participants also found time for fun – CPOPT Tom O'Malley organised a range of activities for the MCC, including early morning cliff runs, circuits, cricket, watersports, bowling and team games.

In addition, augmentee Lt Cdr Tony Severs, a former RAF officer, now in the RNR Air Branch, who works as an Air Accident Investigation Officer at Farnborough, used his commercial pilot qualifications to take off-watch MCC personnel for flights over the Sovereign Base Area in a light aircraft.

Among the overseas representatives involved in JV08 were 23 members of the Royal Australian Navy.

Australian contingent commander Cdr Mike Hogan – a former RN



● Good technique, but the pitch leaves a bit to be desired – cricket was one of the activities organised by CPOPT Tom O'Malley

aircrewman/SAR diver – said: the Australian contingent valued its participation in what turned out to be a complex and demanding exercise.

"Complex from the political/military angle and demanding in dealing with the natural frictions and frustrations that such a large and complex cross-organisation structure generates; very realistic – but we got through it."

"Observing different processes and exchanging knowledge throughout the exercise has made our attendance an enjoyable and professionally rewarding experience."



● The RAF field kitchen won plaudits for its food – including curries for the Gurkhas

Picture: Sgt Andy Carnall



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Stinging in the rain

It began by night. By helicopter.

It continued by day. On foot. By helicopter. In armour.

It ended on Christmas morning. By helicopter. On foot. And when it was all over an area the size of Glasgow had been wrested from the hands of the Taliban.

3 Commando Brigade launched one of its largest and most concerted attacks since the invasion of Iraq when it unleashed the two-week-long Operation Sond Chara against insurgents in southern Helmand.

More than 1,500 troops – Britons supported by Danes, Estonians and Afghans, bolstered by Danish Leopard tanks – were committed to the offensive whose codename is Pashtu for ‘red dagger’, the brigade’s legendary insignia.

The emphasis of the entire operation was the region surrounding Lashkar Gah, home

to the hub of British operations in Helmand, Camp Bastion.

Sond Chara opened with a helicopter assault by 42 Commando to the south of the city, and a weapons stash/drugs factory in the Nawa district which fell into the green berets’ hands.

Stealth saves lives – on both sides. Not a shot was fired by the 42 men during the raid which caught the enemy ‘on the hop’.

As 42 were taking stock of their haul – a number of home-made bombs and ‘wet opium’ worth around £2m – eight miles to the north-west of Lashkar Gah, Danish armour was rolling through the desert and into the Nad E’Ali district.

The Leopard tanks were engaged by Taliban rocket-propelled grenades, machine-guns and, in the latter stages of the fighting, 107mm rockets – none of which was a match for the Danish tanks’ 120mm main guns (31 shells left the

barrels during the attack); Allied mortars and missiles joined in the hellish concert.

The firepower had the desired effect. The Taliban, one Danish officer observed, ‘were dealt a stinging defeat’.

After the battle, a pause. For three days, the Allied forces halted operations out of respect for the Muslim festival of Eid.

With the religious celebration passed, Sond Chara resumed in earnest.

The air and armoured assaults had merely been the prelude.

The main offensive began in the dark of December 11 with a combined air and ground assault, again at Nad E’Ali.

This time the marines – Kilo Company, 42 Commando (aka The Black Knights) and the

Commando Reconnaissance Force – were determined to secure part of the town so engineers could set up forward bases from which Allied troops could conduct their patrols.

Nad E’Ali had been, if not a Taliban stronghold, then certainly a district rarely visited by Allied forces during their seven years in Afghanistan.

With winter set in, conditions at times resembled the Somme or Flanders more than 21st-Century Afghanistan. Heavy rain turned the dirt and dust to mud, the tracks became quagmires.

Two forward bases were built by the sappers of 59 Commando Royal Engineers – the marines’ dedicated engineer unit – in grim conditions. The rain at time was torrential and the

men worked in mud up to their knees, usually under enemy fire; the Taliban weren’t too chuffed that compounds they had once held were now being turned into Allied bastions.

With the engineers striving to build up the two bases, 42 Commando’s Lima Company struck to ensure the Taliban would not return.

As dawn began to cast light on the town that Thursday morning, Lima and Afghan soldiers were striking at known insurgent routes between the two fledgling fortifications.

And a stone’s throw to the west an eclectic Anglo-Afghan force pushed into another one-time Taliban stronghold, Shin Kalay.

Proof that the 11,000-strong local populace was delighted to cast off the fundamentalists’ yoke was immediate; Shin Kalay’s inhabitants raised green flags of celebration all over town.

Continued overleaf

31
– the number of tank shells fired during the battle of Nad E’Ali

● (Above) The essence of war in Helmand... Men of Whiskey Company, 45 Commando, make their way back to Forward Operating Base Jackson at Sangin in the fading light after a particularly arduous five-hour patrol. Winter rain turned ploughed fields into mud baths. 45’s official cameraman LA (Phot) Nick Tryon accompanied the patrol and ‘almost didn’t take’ this picture so exhausted was he lugging his kit around. ‘Glad I did, though,’ he says. ‘In my mind it summed up the mood out here for the men of 45 Commando.’

● (Below) Members of the Commando Logistic Regiment work on their vehicles under the blanket of night



“The enemy knows there is no such thing as a safe haven and that we can – **and we will** – reach out and touch



● Men of Lima Company, 42 Commando, yomp towards the setting sun at the height of Exercise Sond Chara

Continued from page 21

The insurgents were less easily dislodged from the Allies' next objective. After several days' pause and regrouping, a commando-Army-Afghan-Estonian battlegroup began the assault on Zarghun Kalay.

It proved to be the fiercest action of Sond Chara. Terrible weather, atrocious terrain, strong Taleban resistance.

"The rain did not let up for three days," said one gunner with 29 Commando Regiment RA. "We were up to our ankles in muddy water. As we waited for 'H Hour', one of the guys turned to me and whispered: 'Are we in Sennybridge?'"

For two days, the fundamentalists tried to stall the Allied attack at Zarghun Kalay.

The pounding by Allied firepower – Cobra and Apache gunships – and the commandos' 105mm guns, caused the Taleban lines to crumble; they fled north, abandoning the town.

Barely 48 hours after the battle for Zarghun Kalay began, the commandos' battlegroup

commander, Col Martin Smith, his Afghan counterpart and the district leader were sitting down in the mosque in the middle of town chatting with tribal elders and inhabitants at a *shura* (meeting), discussing restoring some form of normal life.

For in the wake of the warriors came teachers, medics, engineers – Military Stabilisation Support Teams – all determined to restore public services, notably health centres and schools, which had been non-existent under the Taleban.

While the peacemakers were establishing themselves in Nad E'Ali, the last act of Sond Chara opened in the small hours of Christmas Day.

Helicopters ferried 42 Commando into Chah-E-Anjir, opposite Zhargun Kalay – and a long-time safe haven of the Taleban.

By nightfall on this holy day, the insurgents no longer exerted control over the village. Their key control compound was in Allied hands (along with considerable booty) and Sond Chara had achieved what it set out to do: to dislodge the fundamentalists

from a large swathe of the left bank of the Helmand river.

"These operations have been successful," said Col Smith.

"Many insurgents have been killed – or have left the area – and peace is returning to the heart of the district.

"We do not underestimate the challenges ahead, but we will do everything in our power to support local people in their quest to be free of the oppressive influence of the insurgents."

Lt Col Charlie Stickland, 42 Cdo's Commanding Officer, added: "The enemy knows there is no such thing as a safe haven and that we can – and we will – reach out and touch him."

Upwards of 100 enemy are thought to have been killed during the two-week offensive which was sadly not without casualties.

We reported the deaths of Mnes Georgie Sparks and Tony Evans in last month's paper; the names of green berets L/Cpl Ben Whatley, Cpl Robert Deering and soldiers Rifleman Stuart Nash, plus three civilians, have since been added to the roll of honour (see page 24 for the Royal Marines' obituaries).

AFTER a respite of a fortnight or so, 42 Commando thrust another dagger into the Taleban's heart, this time near Kandahar.

Shahi Tandar (Royal Storm) was a three-day Anglo-Canadian blitz of insurgents' compounds in the districts of Khakrez and Shah Wali Khot – which border one of the main routes through Kandahar province.

As at Nawa a month before, it began with a night helicopter assault by 42, this time Kilo

Company.

The aerial prong was supported by one on the ground, courtesy of 3rd Battalion Royal Canadian Regiment.

Between them the Royals and the Canadians searched more than 50 compounds, buildings, farmsteads.

The result was an enormous haul of weapons – and a bomb factory smashed.

That latter success was particularly welcome; Allied troops and Afghan civilians around Kandahar had reported a surge in the use of booby traps by the Taleban in recent months.

More than 100 detonators and three dozen 'pressure plates' – triggers for mines and booby traps – were seized, plus half a dozen tubs packed with explosives, more than 20 rocket-propelled grenades, rifles and grenades.

The troops also uncovered ball bearings hidden in an underground cache and a sizeable amount of drugs, including 20kg of wet opium (worth in excess of £125,000).

Shahi Tandar also saw eight

suspected insurgents arrested and one Canadian soldier killed (by an improvised explosive device).

Yet again, said Lt Col Stickland, 42 Commando had "dealt a serious blow to the insurgency".

He praised his men: "42 Commando now have a reputation across southern Afghanistan for having a 'ferret-like' nose for weapons caches."

SOND Chara, Shahi Tandar and a host of other named – and nameless – operations directed throughout southern Afghanistan by 3 Commando Brigade require a huge supporting 'pillar' in the rear area.

With isolated, dispersed bases and poor roads, the success of the supply chain supporting the Royals determines whether the mission in Helmand and Kandahar succeeds.

In the first two months in Afghanistan, the Commando Logistic Regiment led 11 resupply 'convoys' – now renamed Combat Logistic Patrols to emphasise the front-

4 – the number of hours sleep marines and sailors can expect during a convoy

pictures: (a) photos nick tryon, 45 cdo, and gaz faulkner, 42 cdo, cpl john rafoss usmc, sgt james elmer rlc, and it andy cheal rmc



him.”



line nature of the mission – across 3,000 miles of terrain, devouring 680,000 litres (150,000 gallons) of fuel in the process.

Demanding as these patrols are for the drivers, gunners, medics, passengers, they place enormous stress on the mechanics who ‘prep’ every vehicle before it sets off.

These engineers – the Light Aid Detachment – are never more than 22 strong, yet in two months’ work they put in more than 16,500 man hours of work.

No two patrols are the same. Not only does the make-up of the column change depending on what needs delivering to the various Allied forward bases scattered around Helmand, but so too does the support provided by the Allies, notably the Americans, Danes and Estonians so far – and the threat from the enemy.

“The threat is quite significant – the battlefield in Afghanistan is 360,” said Maj Marcus Taylor RM who took part in four of the first 11 convoys.

“There is no front line and the Taliban fighters are everywhere, particularly in areas where our

patrols need to go.

“I have young marines, soldiers, sailors in the convoy ranging from 18 up to very experienced NCOs.

“They had little more than four hours’ sleep in every 24. Everyone was pretty tired by the end and running on adrenaline.”

The regiment is not Royal Marine through-and-through; there’s a sizeable tranche of sailors (they comprise one in every nine personnel in the CLR) who have adapted well to the landlocked, dusty surroundings of Helmand.

“It was one of our able seamen who was first to contact the enemy in anger with his machine gun,” said Maj Taylor. “Naturally, this is a fact which Jack is not inclined to let Royal forget in a hurry.”

The patrols bring not merely the necessities – fuel, ammunition, water, food – but also those ‘creature comforts’ which keep up morale: letters, parcels, presents.

No expense was spared to ensure most troops could tuck into turkey (or gammon, pork or beef if they so desired) on

Christmas Day, accompanied by roast veg, sausage and bacon rolls, Yorkshire pud, sprouts (*the Devil’s vegetable* – *Assistant Ed*), carrots, cabbage, finished off with Christmas cake, Christmas pudding, mince pies, cheesecake, peach schnapps gateaux, shortbread, custard and whipped cream (*all on the same plate knowing Royal – Ed*).

And if there was any room left in the stomachs, a wafer-thin After Eight mint was the very last item on the menu. It’s not just food for the here and now, but food for tomorrow which has been delivered courtesy of the Commando Logistic Regiment and the new Army battalion permanently attached to the Royal Marines, 1 Rifles.

The soldiers have been at the hub of efforts to distribute 3,200 tonnes of wheat to ten times

as many farmers in a bid to usurp the poppy as the region’s principal crop.

Helmand is responsible for around two fifths of Afghanistan’s drugs trade – a trade which is believed to fund the Taliban and other terrorist organisations to the tune of around \$500m (£330m) every year.

The wheat is being distributed to 21,000 farmers around Lashkar Gah, 5,000 in Gereshk 20 miles to the northeast, 3,600 in Garmsir, 2,000 in Sangin and around half that number in Musa Qaleh.

In return for the wheat, the farmers must sign a commitment agreeing not to grow poppy this year; if they break the contract, they face action from Afghanistan’s anti-drugs police.

The Riflemen safeguarded the delivery of the first 200 tonnes of wheat to Sangin – enough

to support 2,000 farmers and 20,000 Helmand inhabitants for seven or eight years.

TWO dozen miles north of Sangin, up the Musa Qaleh valley lies the namesake town, scene of bitter fighting between the Taliban and Allied troops over the past three years.

Today it’s the Gurkhas who are in charge of the battlegroup HQ in the town, bolstered by commando gunners, the Queen’s Dragoon Guards, Royal Engineers, Princess of Wales’ Royal Regiment... and half a dozen RN medics.

The sailors make up the core of the regimental aid post – the forward treatment centre for Allied and Afghan troops wounded in action, plus local civilians.

And while many casualties of enemy action pass through the small ‘clinic’, so too does a large number of youngsters.

“For many of the medics, this is the first time that they’ve have been involved in dealing with children,” said Capt Emily Peers, 2nd Royal Gurkha Rifles.

“This can sometimes be made even more difficult by language and cultural difficulties.”

The medics are not confined to their first aid post, however. Much of the time they accompany the soldiers on patrols.

“It’s a steep learning curve, but you have to take it in your stride,” said 20-year-old MA Will Randall on his first deployment.

“You have to – no matter how old you are.

“I didn’t think I’d be so busy – we’re treating a lot of civilians and really feel like we’re achieving a lot.”

Home to the young rating and his medical comrades is not, as he expected, a tent, but it is basic: a converted old garage.

Although Senior Service numbers at Musa Qaleh are relatively small, the RN comprises roughly one third of Task Force Helmand, a figure – and a commitment – perhaps rarely appreciated beyond naval circles.

“It’s important to remember that the Royal Navy works out here alongside the infantry,” said MA Randall.

“I’m proud to be part of it.”

330
– the millions of pounds generated by Afghanistan’s drugs trade to support insurgents



The price of freedom

● A Combat Logistic Patrol rolls towards Nad E'Ali at nightfall

FRIDAY December 12 2008 was a black day in the recent history of 45 Commando as the Taliban claimed the lives of four Royal Marines in two insidious attacks.

Suicide bombers struck at two separate patrols near Sangin within 60 minutes – using a teenage boy as their stooge in the deadliest attack.

The bloody hour began when the Jackal vehicle L/Cpl Steven 'Jamie' Fellows (Whiskey Company, 45 Cdo) was patrolling in hit a mine or roadside bomb.

All three men in the Jackal were wounded by the explosion but vehicle commander L/Cpl Fellows bore the brunt of the blast. He never regained consciousness and died while being flown to hospital.

In the second attack less than an hour later, a combined foot patrol by Royals from 45 Commando and the Commando Logistic Regiment was approached by a 13-year-old boy pushing a wheelbarrow.

The wheelbarrow hid a bomb – detonated, possibly remotely by an insurgent, when the youngster was close to three marines.

Sgt John Manuel was killed instantly; his X-Ray Company comrade Cpl Marc Birch died of his injuries at the scene while Mne Damian Davies of the CLR died at hospital in Camp Bastion.

The first victim that day, 26-year-old **L/Cpl Steven 'Jamie' Fellows** from Sheffield, joined the Corps in November 2006 and passed out of Lymington as the best recruit in his troop. Within a year he'd been promoted lance corporal and selected for sniper training (which he passed). He leaves behind his wife and childhood sweetheart Natalie.

"Jamie was a colossus – he was never one to let life pass him by," said his friend Mne Josh Green. "He was always the most outspoken person in the troop. Needless to say he was one of the most popular. It was his ability to live life to the max that sticks out the most."

Sgt John 'Manny' Manuel hailed from Gateshead. The 38-year-old was a veteran of almost every theatre the Royals have operated in these past two decades, notably Iraq and Kosovo.

The NCO, who leaves behind his partner Rachel, joined the Corps in 1989 and was eyeing up a second career as an advanced motorbike instructor (motorcycling and martial arts were his other two mainstays after the green berets) upon eventually leaving the marines.

Comrades described him as "the Jack Russell of the Royal Marines – small, feisty and hyperactive; he did everything at Mach 10".

Maj Richard Maltby, Officer Commanding X-Ray Company said Sgt Manuel was "part of the backbone" of his company and "a limitless ball of fire".

He continued: "Sgt Manuel was hugely popular – he combined a mischievous sense of humour with a dedication and professional manner that was second to none."

Like 'Manny' Manuel, **Cpl Marc 'Birchy' Birch** was a keen sportsman. Football was his game. The 26-year-old had even scored a goal against the Sierra Leone national team – a moment which became a legendary dit.

He passed out of Lymington in March 2000 and served with 42 Cdo and Fleet Protection



● Clockwise from top left... L/Cpl Steven 'Jamie' Fellows, who lived life to the max; Sgt John 'Manny' Manuel, "the Jack Russell of the Royal Marines"; Cpl Liam 'Elmsy' Elms, who always took the fight to the enemy; Mne Travis Mackin, "a hooving bloke"; L/Cpl Benjamin Whatley, "a man's man"; Capt Tom Sawyer, "courage in abundance"; Cpl Richard 'Robbo' Robinson, who "gave his all with his team around him"; Cpl Danny Winter, "the heart of a lion"; Cpl Robert Deering, "who thought nothing of going the extra mile"; Mne Damian Davies, "one of the strongest characters in the troop"; and Cpl Marc 'Birchy' Birch, "as good a Bootneck as you could find"



Group RM before heading north of the border to 45.

A heavy weapons specialist (or 'Tankie'), Cpl Birch, from Kingsthorpe in Northamptonshire, had enjoyed fewer than four months' married life with his bride Charlene.

Junior commandos looked up to him – "we can only hope to aspire to be as good a bootneck as Birch," said Mne Joe Hawley – and all who knew him admired his sense of humour.

"He would often work on the one-per-cent rule," said Cpl John Cowie, a fellow Tankie. "Tell enough jokes and one per cent of them would get the desired result."

"Whenever a prank was played within the troop, Birch would be the ringmaster. Like a child with his hand caught in the cookie jar, he would be found guilty simply by the grin on his face."

Mne Damian Davies of the UK Landing Force Support Party, Commando Logistic Regiment, was a devoted Royal and a devoted family man with his wife Joanne, his 19-month-old son Mathew and another child on the way.

He spent 18 months in the RN before switching to the Corps, passing out of Lymington at the end of 2002 and specialised as a driver.

Known as Damo by comrades, he was renowned for his infectious sense of humour and sense of duty.

"Damo was one of the strongest characters in the troop – always joking, with a permanent smile on his face, even in the worse conditions," said Sgt Kenyon, his troop sergeant.

"He never complained about anything and always put 110 per cent effort into all he did. He was always itching to get out on the ground to do the job he was trained for."

Sadly, the bloodletting did not end with that bitter Friday; nine days later, **Cpl Robert 'Rob' Deering** was killed as he tried to assess the damage to a Viking armoured vehicle which had

struck a mine.

As the 33-year-old from the West Midlands approached the stricken Viking a second explosion killed him instantly.

Cpl Deering joined the Corps in 1998 and specialised as a vehicle mechanic, spending most of his career with the Commando Logistic Regiment. He had already come through one tour of duty in Afghanistan, as well as Iraq and Kosovo.

Comrades said his love for fast cars and fitness was matched by his love for his fiancée Gemma, with whom he'd just moved into a new home.

"Rob was liked by all who met him," said his Troop Colour Sergeant Simon Nicholson. "He was good looking, had great 'pecs' and a cheery smile – once you met him you'd never forget him."

Capt Scott Ashley, second-in-command of the Armoured Support Group RM, added: "Cpl Deering was an outstanding vehicle mechanic who thought nothing of going the extra mile in true Royal Marines fashion."

"He was never one to complain and always gave 100 per cent. He will be missed by all who worked with him and the Viking fraternity."

L/Cpl Benjamin Whatley was the only Royal killed in direct battle with the enemy, cut down during a ferocious fire-fight with insurgents on Christmas Eve.

The 20-year-old from King's Lynn was leading his comrades in Lima Company, 42 Commando, during an operation to clear Taliban forces from the Nad-E-Ali region of central Helmand when he was killed by enemy fire.

His Lima Company CO Maj Rich Cantrill said the Afghanistan veteran was a born warrior.

"Ben had that magic ingredient of 'presence'. He was a fighter, a man's man, a Royal Marine to the core," he added.

Cpl Luke Colman, a section commander in Lima Company added: "Ben was a superb soldier, going up and down the line encouraging the other lads when things were getting hard."

"More than all this, he was a great friend to all the lads in the section, me included. Words cannot express what a great loss this has been to all of us."

Black December ended with another green beret victim of Taliban cowardice.

Section commander **Cpl Liam 'Elmsy' Elms** was killed by a blast as he conducted a patrol of southern Helmand with his Zulu Company, 45 Commando, comrades and troops from the Afghan National Army.

The 26-year-old from Wigan was the consummate Royal Marine – a first-rate marksman, a first-rate skier, a first-rate sportsman – he played rugby league for the green berets – and a first-rate leader.

He joined the Corps in 2001 and served in Northern Ireland and Iraq before inspiring a new generation of commandos as an instructor at Lymington.

"His refusal to let a small thing beat him – or anything else for that matter – just goes to prove his drive and determination," said Capt Ben Cassells, a troop commander in Zulu Company.

"Elmsy was a section commander of the highest quality. He was always a key personality in a very tight-knit family."

"He led his section with pride and dedication, always taking the fight to the enemy."

"He will be missed by us all and I take great pride in calling him a friend."

The first fatality of the new year was 22-year-old **Mne Travis Mackin** from Plymouth, a veteran of 3 Cdo Bde's tour of duty in Helmand in 2006-07.

He was part of a specialist team in Victor Company, 45 Commando, working alongside Afghan soldiers and police in Kajaki.

The marine was killed during an offensive patrol by his company and Afghan counterparts. He was setting up a fire position to support comrades advancing on a Taliban stronghold when an enemy booby trap blew up.

Mne Mackin joined the Corps in 2004 and specialised as a

communicator, latterly serving in 539 ASRM before this fateful tour of duty in Helmand.

"Travis was a true marine," said WO2 Robert Millman, Victory Company Sergeant Major.

"His sense of humour intoxicated all around him. Even when put in extreme situations, he could lighten the moment with a practical joke."

"He even arranged for Santa to visit his Sergeant Major on Christmas Eve. He will be in my good books forever."

Comrade Mne Tom Jeffcote added: "Travis asked to be sent to the most dangerous place in Afghanistan. He was – and I know he loved every minute of it."

"I think I speak for everyone who knew him when I say he was a 'hooving' bloke, an excellent soldier and he will be massively missed by all of us."

An Anglo-Danish operation to clear Taliban bunkers north-east of Gereshk claimed the lives of **Capt Tom Sawyer**, 29 Commando Regiment RA and **Cpl Danny Winter**, Zulu Company, 45 Commando.

Both men were part of a fire support unit – and both were killed by an explosion.

Capt Sawyer, a 26-year-old junior officer who had been married less than a year, was eyeing up a career in the Special Forces.

"Tom always worked hard for his men and commanded with style and panache," said Capt Sam Hewitt RA, Fire Support Team Commander attached to 29 Cdo Regt.

"He possessed qualities such as honour, selflessness and courage in abundance. The world will be a sadder place without him."

"It was a pleasure to have known and served alongside him. He paid the ultimate sacrifice and he will not be forgotten."

Cpl Winter, 28, from Stockport, was a mortar specialist and a veteran of conflict in Iraq and Afghanistan.

He joined the Corps aged

just 16 and specialised in heavy weapons early in his career.

"Danny was a key personality within Zulu Company who all the lads looked up to," said his Company Sergeant Major WO2 Kevin Cheeseman.

"We just want to say that he was a true 'Zulu Warrior'. A true bootneck has been lost."

Sgt 'GTC' Jones, senior NCO in 45 Cdo's Mortar Troop, added: "Danny was the heart and soul of whatever the lads were doing at any time."

"He had a strong character, was calm under pressure and had the heart of a lion."

Another death struck the Brigade mid-month when **Acting Cpl Richard 'Robbo' Robinson** from 1st Battalion, The Rifles, was ambushed by enemy fire north of Sangin.

Cpl Robinson was on patrol with his Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team and the Afghan National Army platoon when struck down.

The 21-year-old from Saltash joined E Company, 1 Rifles, in April last year as a Sniper, Mentor and second-in-command.

His CO Lt Col Joe Cavanagh said: "He was a popular, talented man and will be badly missed. Highly qualified and richly experienced for one of his vintage, he was credible and confident as an Acting Corporal and was already showing potential well beyond that."

"How proud we are of this courageous young man; he had achieved great things and yesterday he gave his all with his team around him. We are lucky to have served alongside him."

WO2 Paul Goldsmith, Company Sergeant Major E Company, said: "Robbo, a quiet guy by nature, commanded respect from others by his ability and above all a cool head when in difficult situations, which was demonstrated on numerous occasions when out on patrol."

"He leaves a large void in the company and an even larger one within his team which will not be easy to fill, if at all."

True for all these brave men.



This celebratory year of naval aviation is not merely about the past. The Fleet Air Arm's new jump jet will do just that in 2009 – jump. Joint Strike Fighter chief test pilot Jon Beesley updates us on progress with the replacement for the Harrier.



Enter the fifth generation game

THERE is something magical about the Harrier.

Best of British and all that. Designed by men with slide rulers, paper and pencil, not mice, tablets and computer programs.

The problem with nostalgia is that it's, er, nostalgic. Yes the jump jet's best of British, but it's aged, more than half a century old now.

The sun is slowly setting on the very last variant of the Harrier, the GR9.

It is slowly rising on its successor, the Joint Strike Fighter, the great white hope of naval fixed wing aviation in the 21st Century.

UK plc is investing more than £2bn in around 130 JSF for the Fleet Air Arm and RAF.

It will be the punch of HM Ships Queen Elizabeth and Prince of Wales for at least the first half of their careers.

We won't see either of the ships until 2015 at the earliest. We should see the JSF (just to confuse matters, it's also known as the F-35 Lightning II and, less frequently, Joint Combat Aircraft) in our skies a little sooner.

The first Joint Strike Fighters are due to be in service with the US military in 2011-12, so the day when it crosses the Pond for the first time is looming.

To date, a relatively small number of Brits have seen the Joint Strike Fighter. So what can they expect?

They can expect something a world away from a Harrier.

"This is leading-edge technology. There's nothing about the F-35 which is lagging behind technologically," enthuses Jon Beesley, chief test pilot for JSF builders Lockheed Martin.

"The JSF will change the way people think about aircraft, and anything which comes up against it will have to be a whole level of magnitude better to beat it."

The Joint Strike Fighter is a fifth-generation jet fighter (Meteors and Me262s are 'first generation'; the Harrier is 'third generation')...

...Which to non-fast jet jockeys probably doesn't mean a great deal. In a nutshell, it's cutting-edge computer and flight systems merged with stealth technology.

Still none the wiser? A couple of examples should give you the idea...

One is the Helmet Mounted Display. Nothing new you might think – pilot helmets featuring various flight data and targeting systems (think Apache) have been around since the 80s.

Except that all the vital information is held on the helmet's visor; there is no Heads-Up Display – that mainstay of combat aircraft for four decades – on the JSF.

And remember *Firefox*? The 1980s Clint Eastwood spy thriller (with rather dodgy special effects and Clint sporting an equally dodgy 'tache)? "Think Russian," a Soviet scientist urges Clint in a 'Use the Force' moment. Clint does. Missile fires. Enemy blown out of sky.

The finished version Joint Strike Fighter will have voice-recognition software. You won't have to 'think Russian' obviously – but nor will it be used to fire missiles.

"A pilot can select weapons faster than he can think about doing the action – voice recognition software is far more useful for those more complicated functions, such as selecting a radio frequency, picking a waypoint," explains Mr Beesley.

The net result is that the JSF gives the pilot better situational awareness.

"It's important to know where you are, it's important to know where your enemies are and – thanks to the JSF's stealth – it's important that your enemies don't know where you are," says the test pilot.

"If you flew a Phantom, you spent at least half your time trying to control the aircraft. If you make the aircraft easier to fly, you have more time to think."

The Phantom was 'third generation'. From design to front-line service was just eight years.

The JSF is already a dozen years in the making. 'Demonstrator' versions took to the skies in 2000 – allowing the American and British governments to pick the Lockheed Martin version of the jet, the X-35, ahead of

its rival, Boeing's X-32.

As of the end of 2008, the conventional JSF prototype had flown 69 times and conducted many of the manoeuvres and functions which will be expected of it in service – supersonic flight, air-to-air refuelling, carrying a payload.

Britain is buying the STOVL (Short Take-Off, Vertical Landing) version of the jet.

And although it's flown – 14 times to be precise – it's only been flown 'conventionally'; no short take-offs, no vertical landings. Yet.

That all changes in 2009.

This month the jet heads for the hover pit. Although the JSF will be attached to the ground by (very strong) chains, engineers will be able to measure the thrust and take other vital readings as the aircraft hovers above the pit (hence the name...).

Next month comes air-to-air refuelling and following some more tests of STOVL systems, in May or June the first vertical landing.

Jon Beesley joined the JSF team in 2002 – but it would

be four years before he or any of his other fellow test pilots would get to fly the first prototype Joint Strike Fighter.

By that day, December 15, 2006, the JSF had a new name – F-35 Lightning II, as a homage to the wartime American P38 and the legendary Cold War fighter the English Electric Lightning.

And in those four years every facet of the aircraft was tested on the ground by the pilots and the engineers.

The test pilots spent hours in the simulators (and still spend around ten hours each week on them) tweaking, refining, passing on their knowledge and expertise to the designers.

And at the same time, many of the thousands of parts and components which make up the JSF 'jigsaw' have been tested to 150 per cent of the levels and stresses laid down in the aircraft's original specifications.

All the testing, tweaking, or the scientific analysis counts for nothing if the aircraft doesn't perform.

Jon Beesley is in no doubt that it does.

"The guys on the ground have done an excellent job – they make us look good up there," he says.

"What's the JSF like to fly? Very nice, very easy. Comparable to the Raptor. And it has tremendous combat capability."

And he should know. His CV is a 'who's who' (or, more accurately, a 'what's what') of modern jets: the Phantom, the F-117 stealth fighter, the F-16 Falcon, the F-22 Raptor. In all, he's clocked up more than 5,500 hours in more than 50 aircraft (earning almost as many commendations, testimonials and accolades).

Most of those hours in our skies have been spent as a test pilot.

So what does he look for?

"There are so many systems on this aircraft which have never been flown before, so you want to see if the aircraft really is the one that was planned," he explains.

"In many cases, the technology works even better than predicted."

"If you think about the Harrier, we've taken a lot of the complexity out of it – because we can. We have the technology and the computers these days."

There are huge leaps in technology between the Harrier – a child of the 50s and 60s – and the Joint Strike Fighter – a child of the 90s and 00s.

Will today's breed of RN and RAF aviators be able to leap two generations?

Jon Beesley believes they will.

"There's a good training package for pilots – I don't see any problems in converting from a Harrier to a JSF," he says confidently.

"Harrier pilots are pretty smart guys – I'm sure they'll pick it up."

VAAC to the future, page 4

The five ages of jet combat

First generation
1940s
Me262
Sea Hawk
Meteor (left)
Sabre

Second Generation
1950s
Sea Vixen
Lightning (left)
Scimitar

Third Generation
1960s
Harrier (left)
F4 Phantom
Saab Viggen

Fourth Generation
1970s
Tornado (left)
MiG-29
F15 Eagle
F/A18 Hornet

Generation 4.5
1980s
F15 Strike Eagle
F/A18 Super Hornet
Eurofighter Typhoon (left)

Fifth Generation
2000s
F-22 Raptor (left)
F-35 Lightning II





The day of the dragon

WITH REGARD to the article on the launch of HMS Dragon (December) my grand-daughter, Lisa Macpherson, who was a Gang Plank member some years ago, and won several of the competitions, is now an Engineering Apprentice with BVT.

She was lucky enough to be chosen as one of the young apprentices to represent BVT at the launch.

A very proud day for all the family.

— M Christie, Kilmacolm Scotland



Salty seadog seeks shipmates

I AM a retired Chief Petty Officer and I am living aboard my 50ft motor/sailing vessel Saiorse in the Eastern Mediterranean.

I would like to contact any ex-RN, RM or WRNS etc who may be interested in joining me for a cruise through the Greek Islands, Turkish Coast, Syria, and Cyprus, and eventually to Egypt this coming summer.

A sense of adventure, physical fitness and a good sense of humour are more important than sailing experience.

Please contact me by email on alanandicare@yahoo.co.uk or by telephone on 0039 3409558503 (Italy) I am currently in Cariati, Southern Italy, until March.

Blue skies and calm seas,

— Alan Booth, Northolt, London



Somerset's Christmas cheer

WE THOUGHT your readers might like to see how we spent our time over Christmas duties on HMS Somerset in Plymouth

From left to right are AB Danny Tregarthen;

LWEA 'Scottie' Waters, LLogs Craig Spurgeon; Lt Jim Harkin; Logs Mel Haslam, ET(WE) Joe Noon, and AB Illy Venetti.

— SWEA 'Scottie' Waters, HMS Somerset

Submariners need the SETT

AS A former submariner, now aged 77, I could not agree more with Derek Thorne (letters, December) about the Submarine Escape Training Tank.

The confidence that I and my colleagues gained from the 100ft escape tank was immense, totally beyond the intended purpose of the training.

From my training, I was left with the confidence that if it all went pear-shaped and all else failed, at least I might be able to do something for myself.

Advanced technology is excellent and I applaud that. Long may it continue, but please don't expect it to replace that inner sense of security and confidence that the individual can have in himself if all else fails. I was left with the confidence that 'at least I will always be able to do something to get out of this.'

False as that may prove to be, at least it reassured me in the job that I was doing.

Advancement in submarines, submarine technology, and escape technology is fine, but remember the early submariners. They did what they did because they were more confident in their own

ability than in the machine they were sent to sea in. They just had to be aware of the risks associated with their boats, but were still confident in their own ability to survive.

Look at the A1. Please don't let some prat who has never been to sea in a submarine make the decisions.

— Brian Cox, formerly of Sidon and Tally-Ho! Bridport, Dorset

...I AGREE that the MOD must have gone mad. Going through the tank put me off becoming a submariner for a long time until I joined the Polaris Project.

I entered the tank with apprehension and left after completing the training much more confident. I had further experience when a number of us escaped during a trial from Repulse 150ft beneath the surface of Loch Fyne back in the 1970s.

I wanted to experience the real thing in controlled conditions, as one day I might be the senior survivor.

The experience has never left me, I found the water in a Scottish loch much colder than the bath water in the SETT, the pressure came on much quicker and the journey to the surface seemed

much longer.

It was quite a traumatic experience but our training in the tank was invaluable and put us in good stead. I would have hated that to be my first experience of using the escape equipment.

Even after 27 years I remember the escape procedures. The decision whether to use the rush escape or sit tight until help arrived depended on the number of survivors and the volume of air available. What happens if there is not enough air to stay until help arrives and none of the survivors have had the wet tank experience?

I was led to believe the RN preferred their escape method to the rescue vehicle because it gave the crew a certain amount of independence to make the decision when to leave.

Waiting for a rescue vehicle coming from the other side of the world could spell disaster. Surely the cost of maintaining this training facility must be worth it, even if it saves one life?

This I believe is just another cost-cutting exercise and should be resisted, perhaps a few letters to MPs and the MOD might have the desired effect.

— Lofty Powers, Ball Hill, Newbury

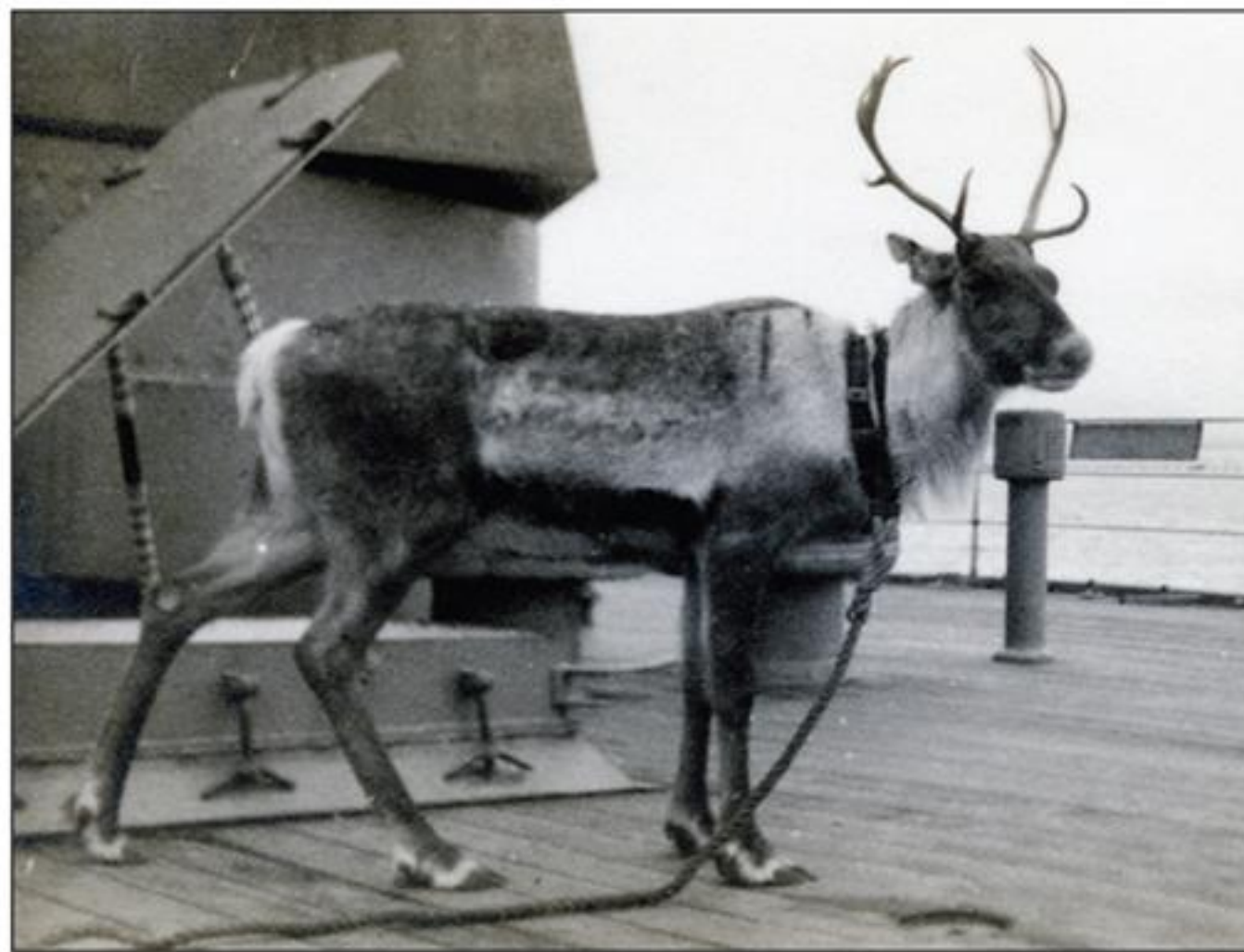
Kent's lucky mascot

FOLLOWING the article on HMS Kent's reindeer episode, I enclose a photo of the animal on-board the ship.

We had to billet the reindeer between Y gun and X gun barbette with canvas screens to prevent it from jumping over the side.

The reindeer must have brought us luck because it was one of the very rare occasions that we came down from Murmansk without having to fire any of our armament - which would have killed the beast.

— David Davis, Tilgate, Crawley, West Sussex



Last of the lovable Battleaxes

IT IS WITH a certain degree of sadness that I recently learned of the passing of actress Kathy Staff, best-known for her portrayal of Nora Batty in the long-running sitcom *Last of the Summer Wine* - but she did have a much-valued relationship with a certain ship in the Royal Navy also.

After being in commission for a number of years my old ship was still searching in vain for a female personality to represent us. After all, who would want to be known as Miss (HMS) Battleaxe?

Up stepped Kathy Staff who graciously visited us in our home port of Devonport and had several photos taken in and around the ship and crew, especially one wielding a pusser's broom threateningly at the top of the gangway.

A genuinely nice person, she will be greatly missed. My best wishes are sent to her family.

— Rob 'Gen' Patten, Victoria, British Columbia, Canada

We've searched our archives here for a photograph of the actress in all her finery on board HMS Battleaxe, but sadly to no avail.

If any of our readers can help, please write in to us - Ed

We're in deep trouble - again

THE LAST time I wrote to you was about your reference to an 'underwater pinnacle' having caused some damage to HMS Superb (November's issue).

What is it with you and things sub-aqua? This time, in January's edition, (*Mystery picture*) you refer to RFA Wave Sovereign as a submarine!

I was in company with the RFA on numerous occasions during my time in the Mob, but never once saw her submerged. The thought makes my mind boggle and it certainly gives a new meaning to the term 'milch cow.'

— B R Hudson, Hanworth

Oh dear. Thanks for putting us right - again...

No rest for Talent

IN THE December edition (page 12) you say that the first HMS Talent spent her final years in the Med.

In fact, having completed a refit at Devonport Dockyard in 1964 and after completing work up on the west coast of Scotland, she spent her final years on the First Submarine Squadron based at HMS Dolphin.

I know this because I joined her as an ERA 1, having just completed submarine training, and served in her for the whole of her last commission, finally leaving her in December 1966 as her last Outside Wrecker.

— Brian Thornton

opinion

THE naval historian Colin White, who died on Christmas Day, made the study of Nelson his life's work to such an extent that he became known by many as 'Nelson's representative on earth.'

The description was light-hearted, but it had the ring of truth. Colin White researched diligently for decades to bring new material to light, and he also had a huge empathy for his subject and was able to communicate it in the most engaging way.

A lecture by Colin White was always fun, not least because it was theatrical and rather formal. Not for him the combativeness of so many modern historians (satirised by Alan Bennett in *The History Boys*) or the lamentable modern practice of using the present tense to describe past events.

The views expressed in Navy News do not necessarily reflect those of the Ministry of Defence

He only had to utter his opening words: "Ladies and gentlemen, I would like you to imagine, if you will, that you are standing on the deck of HMS Victory and the year is 1805" - and the magical scene was set.

During Trafalgar 200 Colin White gave an incredible number of public lectures up and down the country - more than 300 in the course of the year. No audience was too small, or too young, or too far-flung for him to put his heart and soul into communicating his knowledge and his passion.

He was a great friend to *Navy News* over the years, and his series *The Golden Thread* (now reprinted on our web in the *Letters* section) gives some idea of his knowledge and imagination, especially for those who will not now hear his lectures. He will be much missed.

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CLASSIC
JACK

BY TUGS



Sad loss to the Naval family

I HAVE just heard of the death of Colin White, who I know worked and did a great deal both in Greenwich and Portsmouth as well as many other areas.

Colin assisted me as HMS Cavalier Association Vice Chairman with information for Cavalier's 60th anniversary, and my wife and I had the privilege to meet him and have a long chat, whilst we were in Portsmouth for the big Trafalgar 200 celebrations in

2005, indeed, he did an enormous amount of work for that occasion.

I am using the library addresses as my source of contact and I would like to pass on my condolences to all who knew him. A very sad loss to you all as well as many in the RN family.

— David Thompson,
National Maritime Museum Library

A quest to honour men of Sturdy

YOU WILL recall that some time back I wrote to you concerning the wreck of HMS Sturdy, recounting my visit to the wreck in October 1940 and my quest to find any survivors and relatives of the ship's company.

I am pleased to report that your article prompted responses from as far afield as Australia. I have even contacted some survivors. I was able to send off several photographs of the graves of the five casualties. I have made several contacts on Tiree and they have been most helpful in placing wreaths on the graves and taking photos.

There have been several visits to Tiree by relatives and I have also been over there on the anniversary of the wreck, the 30th of October.

Relatives and survivors have all expressed a wish to create some sort of memorial to be placed on Tiree. That, mainly, was the purpose of my visit, to consult with the local people and determine what and where we should create a memorial.

The preference is for a memorial plaque which will not be intrusive, erected on a small stone cairn at Sandaigh beach which overlooks the site of the wreck. The wreck has almost totally been salvaged although there is a fair amount of residual debris which can be found by diving on the seabed.

The time has now come for me to seek funding and I have arranged an account with my Plymouth bank. If you could advertise this venture I would be grateful. I shall of course be writing to all those survivors and relatives of the ship's company that I know of.

I am hoping to raise somewhere



in the region of £500 to £1,000 for the project, which I am advised is an appropriate sum, based on experience from a similar project. The aim is to try to get it in place during summer, certainly before the next wreck anniversary in October.

My photo shows myself with Sandaigh beach behind me. This is now locally called Sturdy beach. Furthest away is a rocky reef that Sturdy was lifted right over in the storm. She went aground on the next rocky outcrop and ultimately broke in two with the bows in the grass quite near to where I am standing.

— Lt Cdr M J Gibson (Retd)
58, Southway Lane, Plymouth
PL6 7DL tel 01752 771996.

Please send any donations to Lt Cdr Gibson at his home address, with cheques payable to HMS Sturdy Account — Ed

Dad finds the answer

I WRITE on behalf on my father John Bealing, who as a 17-year-old survivor of the sinking of HMS Fiji on May 22 1941, was rescued by HMS Kandahar and has often wondered about her fate.

The answer was revealed after reading December's issue, page 12 *Heroes of the Royal Navy no. 56*.

My father, who was regular navy, went on to see action in the Arctic Convoys after Crete, and after the war was part of the force involved with the Haifa Landings in 1948.

After 67 years and with his age at a 'young 85' my father is still finding pieces to prompt his memory from books and from *Navy News*.

So thank you *Navy News* for making his own story more complete.

— Christine Chubb, Oakley, Basingstoke

Mess undress

WITH REFERENCE to David Hiron's letter (*January*) asking if retired personnel were wearing uniforms in public, I can assure him that I still wear my mess undress for the dinner dance at Collingwood each year, and it's nice to be able to get into it, having left the RN early in 1995.

So yes, it is still allowed today, exactly what the Second Sea Lord asked us to do.

— Mick Puttick, ex CRS
See page 4 for more the latest guidelines on wearing uniform in public — Ed

Who knows about EWOs?

THE ESTABLISHMENT of Executive Warrant Officers (EWOs) was a significant innovation in the Fleet and merits a mention in the next edition of *The Royal Navy Day by Day*.

Can anyone tell me who were the first EWOs?

When exactly were they appointed and to which ships and establishments?

— Lawrence Phillips, Editor,
The Royal Navy Day by Day,
Northwood,
email lawrie@homecall.co.uk

LETTERS to the editor should always be accompanied by the correspondent's name and address, not necessarily for publication.

E-mail correspondents are also requested to provide this information. Letters cannot be submitted over the telephone.

If you submit a photograph which you did not take yourself, please make sure that you have the permission for us to publish it.

Given the volume of letters, we cannot publish all of your correspondence in *Navy News*.

We do, however, publish many on our website, www.navynews.co.uk, accompanied by images.

We look particularly for correspondence which stimulates debate, makes us laugh or raises important issues.

The editor reserves the right to edit your submissions.



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'ONCE NAVY, ALWAYS NAVY'

Plans to finish are premature

A GROUP of shipmates gathered for one last hurrah – but had such a good time that they decided there was still plenty of petrol in the tank.

The men of HMS Ulster's 1958-60 commission staged what was billed as their 50th and final reunion last October.

The rationale behind the decision was that the organiser, as the second youngest aboard the "unique" commission, had reached his 67th year and felt that older and more senior shipmates would be content to call it a day.

How wrong he was! All attendees had such a good time at the weekend reunion that a unanimous decision was made to stage another reunion in October this year.

HMS Ulster created an unbeaten record in 1959 when at the lake head of Lake Superior in Canada during the official opening of the St Lawrence Seaway, a system of canals which opened up the Great lakes to larger seagoing vessels.

The Commanding Officer of Ulster, Cdr Cameron Rusby, signalled the Admiralty claiming the world altitude record for a British warship as the Type 15 frigate was 600ft above sea level and some 2,000 miles inland.

Group still alert after 50 years

DECEMBER 15 1958 saw the start of a new commission on board HMS Alert in Singapore.

Fifty years on to the day, a group of old shipmates from the despatch vessel celebrated the anniversary with a Christmas dinner and the obligatory Up Spirits.

The shipmates are still looking for colleagues from that commission, so if you served on board between 1958 and 1960 let them know they are not the sole survivors – contact Dave Long on davlev30@talktalk.net or call 01323 891389.

New memorial to Penelope victims

A NEW war memorial dedicated to the men who died when the cruiser HMS Penelope was sunk in the Mediterranean has been dedicated in St Ann's Church in Portsmouth Naval Base.

The ship had left Naples and was heading for Anzio at over 25 knots when she was struck by torpedoes fired by U410 on February 18 1944.

More than 400 men, including her CO Capt G D Belben, were lost with her, while more than 200 survived.

The names of the victims of the sinking were read out by Association vice president David Belben and S/M Mike Noonan, watched by two survivors, S/Ms Bob Freeman and Reg Taylor.

A new plaque was approved at the association's last AGM in Blackpool, as the original one was incorrect and incomplete.

S/M Leo Whistock and the standard bearer from the Royal Marines Association in Portsmouth

NORWICH shipmates have taken their campaign to raise awareness of veterans a step further.

In our November edition we told how members of the branch felt that Veterans Awareness Day in the city "did anything but create awareness", a point which they relayed back to the MOD Veterans Policy Unit.

Taking the initiative themselves, the East Anglian shipmates formed a team of speakers prepared to go into schools to tell the youngsters how it was – and how it is.

It prompted one 11-year-old to observe that, contrary to expectation, "not all veterans are old and confused, a lot are young and fit."

According to branch secretary S/M Ken Baish: "We now take part in their World War 2 history lessons and use speakers who actually created the history."

But the forward-thinking shipmates did not rest there.

Two schools which supported the branch from the outset – the Sir Thomas More Catholic Junior School and Costessey Junior School, both in Norwich – have each been given a large-scale laminated wall map of the world.

But that is just a start.

"The current Commanding Officer of HMS Northumberland is Cdr Martin Simpson, who is a member of our branch and has agreed to 'adopt' these two schools, sending them frequent emails which describe in great detail and with accompanying photographs the ship's journey, places visited and any incident the ship becomes involved in," said S/M Ken.

"In addition, Lt James Taylor, one of the two helicopter pilots on

board Northumberland, has been 'detailed' to liaise directly with two nominated teachers at the school (I have to say both female, young and attractive!) to whom he submits weekly emails couched in a language that the children readily understand.

"This, then, provides a unique, absorbing and interesting geography lesson and, indeed, a lesson in modern history."

"The children follow the route of the ship on the world map and deal with the geography of the ports visited and the area the ship is operating in."

"We visit the schools frequently and, on the last visit, the children were able to point directly to points on the map and discuss the features of the area without prompting."

"This interesting way to learn about the subject has been picked up by the local education authority and our visits are now part of the curriculum."

"The children are living the dream, feel they are part of the ship and are experiencing first-hand what life is like on board one of Her Majesty's ships."

"Also, part of the crew of

Northumberland is female – I believe some 30 in all – which of course is extremely interesting to the girls we speak to.

"The First Sea Lord is fully aware of our visits and has written to the head teachers of both schools thanking them for their support."

"There are schools that do not welcome our talks and we have experienced one or two who have declined the offer of our team of speakers."

"However, on the plus side we have been invited to several schools for next term."



● The Karen Clarke Dancers and veterans organisations' standard bearers flank the Surrey Army cadets Corps of Drums at Woking Town Square for the launch of the Poppy Appeal at the end of last year

(Thirty) grand effort by Woking

SHIPMATES at the Woking branch raised a grand total of £30,300 between the Poppy Day launch and Remembrance Sunday last year.

The tremendous effort by the Woking shipmates was boosted by the local Army Cadet Corps, which raked in £1,000 on the day of the launch.

That day centred on the Town Square and an official ceremony attended by the Mayor of Woking, Cllr Peter Ankers.

He was greeted by standard bearers from veterans associations, the Surrey Army

Cadets' Corps of Drums and dancers from the Karen Clarke School of Dancing.

Launching the appeal, Cllr Ankers reminded the gathered crowds of the tremendous help and support given to British Service personnel and their families by the Legion.

He went on to say, bearing in mind the great debt owed to the Armed Forces in two world wars and subsequent conflicts – especially now in Iraq and Afghanistan – people should try to give generously, in spite of economic strictures.

The drummers then staged a display, followed by a performance of modern dance from the Karen Clarke troupe.

To close the ceremony the spotlight moved on to the veterans, who marched behind the standard bearers.

Many returned to the Town Square for the Remembrance Sunday parade, led by the British Airways Band, and shipmates were also out in force at the War Memorial in the square on Armistice Day, when they were joined by Duty Watch of the Woking Fire Brigade.

Brook lookers, ale tasters and shipmates

MEMBERS of Warwick branch take their civic duties seriously – especially the three who sit on the jury of the city's Court Leet.

The court dates back to the middle of the 16th Century, when it dispensed summary justice and attended to matters of concern to townspeople for the improvement of Warwick as a whole.

Criminal justice is no longer part of its remit, but the advisory role persists in the shape of a group of people who have particular areas of responsibility, depending on their local knowledge and contribution to the life of the city.

S/M Roger Higgins is one of these 24 jurors, revelling in the title Herald/ Leet.

Alongside him is S/M Derek Fletcher, Sergeant at Mace and Beadle for the Court (and secretary of the Warwick branch of the RNA for good measure).

And S/M Terry Gardner fulfils the role of Yeoman in the Court.

These days the Court meets quarterly, and some of the old skills – as denoted by their titles or

behaviour – are no longer needed.

The title of brook looker, for example, just about describes the job of the person who had to check that sewage was not choking sewage streams as they made their way to the Thames.

The ale taster had, on the face of it, one of the worst jobs around – ensuring the quality of ale coming into Warwick was sufficiently high, as well as in sufficient quantities.

He had colleagues who did similar jobs with meat and fish. Members of the Court still ensure ales meet the required standards, presenting certificates to all who do so.

Party time after solemnities

AFTER a busy Remembrance period for the standard bearers and members of Redruth and Camborne branch their December meeting was a chance to let their hair down.

November had seen attendances at Penryn, Falmouth, Redruth, Illogan, Pool, Portreath and Camborne, including a parade and social event at Camborne Conservative Club.

The December gathering, at Redruth Royal British Legion, saw an excellent turn-out of members, and after a short meeting they enjoyed a bring-and-share supper – plenty of party food, accompanied by the usual Up Spirits.

Instead of handing Christmas cards to each other, members were invited to make a donation to Help for Heroes.

Only one discount site has MOD's approval

HAVE you paid or considered paying a subscription for an eligibility card in order to gain access to discounts?

Please be aware that any ID card you have or may receive as a result of subscribing to unofficial discount websites is unlikely to be accepted as adequate proof of ID by the companies operating through the official Ministry of Defence discount scheme.

In other words, there is no need to pay for discounts as the MOD scheme is totally free to access.

As valid proof of identity there are three things that companies look for:

- An official Forces ID card;
- A Veterans badge – see an example of these by going to www.veterans-uk.info/vets_badge/vets_badge.htm
- A Certificate of Eligibility; these can only be downloaded from www.forcesdiscounts-mod.co.uk

There is only one military discount website which is officially endorsed by the MOD, and that is www.forcesdiscounts-mod.co.uk

No other website is allowed to use the -mod suffix in their web address, and you will not be asked to pay a subscription for registering on this website.

The scheme was established for regulars, reserves, veterans, cadets, MOD civil servants and their families, and gives the opportunity for savings on many everyday purchases.

National companies provide special discounts and savings for the Defence community in areas such as finance, health and fitness, holidays, theme parks, attractions, days out, home and garden, computers, phones, insurance, motoring, sport and outdoors.

Deals are updated daily, and more than 1,000 discounts and special deals are available.

Newsletters featuring savings updates and competitions are sent to members monthly.

And a new section of the website is being rolled out over the next few months, providing an opportunity for businesses close to defence establishments to provide and promote special discounts for the defence community.

If you would like a copy of the Defence Discount Directory and do not receive one through the normal channels call SP Pol Pay and Allowances on 0207 807 0016.

Bright spark wins bulbs

A COMPETITION to identify a naval signal at the Orkney branch Christmas dinner did not carry with it the prize one might have expected.

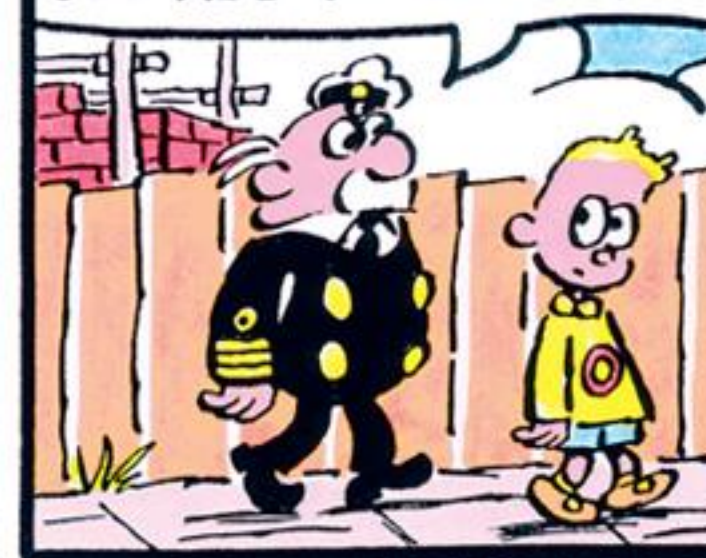
Chairman S/M Dave Hughes had Alpha Delta Two Eight hoisted, and S/M Fred Johnston correctly identified it as 'splice the mainbrace.'

But there was no extra tot of rum for S/M Fred – his prize was six high-quality low-energy light bulbs as the branch pursues a green policy.

A raffle organised by treasurer S/M Daran Brown raised almost £100 for branch funds.

Naval Quirks

A "NEAR MISS" CAN STILL CAUSE CONSIDERABLE DAMAGE TO A SHIP..



Aviators invited to Taranto lunch

AS HAS become the annual practice, the Essex branch of the Fleet Air Arm Association held its annual Taranto lunch at the Old Chelmsfordians Rugby Club.

Amongst the 66 members and guests were the Mayor of Chelmsford, Cllr Tom Willis.

The association was also delighted to welcome members of the active service Fleet Air Arm – Lt Olly Clark of 814 Naval Air Squadron, with whom the branch has a long-standing affiliation, Lt Andy Duthie, on secondment to the AAC at Wattisham and formerly of 814 NAS, and WO1 Wayne Ronayne, Command WO of the Air Command.

Before taking lunch, branch chairman S/M Harry Bass led a tribute to the memory of the lately-departed Senior Member S/M Les Sayer, whose memorial service was taking place at the time at St Mary's Church, Bures St Mary in Suffolk.

Tribute was also paid to Royal Marines Neil Dunstan and Robert McKibben, whose deaths had been announced that morning.

The branch had hoped to have other serving members of the FAA with them but the exigencies of the Service dictated otherwise.

But it is hoped that the 2009 version, in the centenary year of the Fleet Air Arm, will be able to draw on a wider representative group of active service colleagues.

The branch will also celebrate its 20th anniversary this year.

In our obituary for CPO Leslie Sayer we stated that he took part in the 825 NAS attack on the German capital ships during their 'Channel Dash'.

In fact CPO Sayer was asked to swap duties with a colleague shortly before the squadron was scrambled, and was conducting trials in Scotland when 825's Swordfish were thrown into the fray against the Scharnhorst, Gneisenau, Prinz Eugen and their escorts.

The man who requested the swap took CPO Sayer's seat in the lead aircraft and died in the attack.



Models attract interest

LAST month we printed a picture of S/M Dave Weaver of **Stourbridge** branch with his most recently-built model, HMS Diamond.

S/M Dave's skills are not just for members to appreciate, as the picture above attests.

Every year the branch holds a welfare fund collection in the town centre, and in 2008 it yielded £1,163.31.

One of the main factors in drawing the attention of passers-by is the eye-catching display of Dave's models, which always attracts plenty of admirers.

Historic helo is group's target

AVETERANS association has its heart set on obtaining an historic aircraft which featured in our pages in November.

Les Smith, secretary of the 848 Malaya Association, contacted Navy News to correct a statement and to broadcast an appeal.

"I was pleased to see a familiar photograph taken in Malaya in 1955 appearing in the *Navy News* feature."

S/M Les enclosed a contemporary press cutting which told how the helicopter was forced to land in bandit country near Layang Layang, around 60 miles north of Johore Bahru.

Grounded by an engine failure, the crew apparently spent a restless, watchful night beside their machine – which was on its side in a swamp – before being airlifted out by another helicopter.

A ground recovery operation followed soon after, and after being winched from the swamp, hauled over a purpose-built bridge and a temporary timber road 200 yards across the marsh the aircraft was returned to service – bearing the Gurkhas' regimental badge as a tribute to the work put in by their tireless endeavour.

S/M Les does, however, have one small criticism.

"This was no Westland Whirlwind, however – it was a Sikorsky S55 (HRS2), one of ten which equipped 848 NAS during four years in constant operations as the first 'British' troop carrying helicopters," said S/M Les.

"The aircraft in question, WV198K, has survived in private ownership and is the subject of attempts by our association to see it acquired by the Fleet Air Arm Museum.

"This historic airframe is surely deserving of a place at Yeovilton.

"The first 'Westland' versions of the model, Mk1 Whirlwinds, were evaluated by 848 in Malaya and rejected for the troop lifting role due to being underpowered at that time.

"Cdr F Fison was Commander (E) at HMS Simbang, Sembawang, at the time and, together with 848 Squadron's AED, the late Lt Andrew Lloyd, headed the

squadron's salvage team.

"Survivors of the era, the original Junglies, still meet at annual reunions and are still seeking old oppos."

Anyone who served with 848 in Malaya between October 1952 and December 1956 and who wishes to catch up with old shipmates should contact S/M Les at Bees Knees Barn, Church Road, Brimfield, Ludlow SY8 4NF.

Cyprus memorial to open this year

A MEMORIAL to more than 370 British servicemen who died in Cyprus 50 years ago is to be unveiled at the end of this year.

Almost all of the 371 victims – 28 of whom were Royal Navy or Royal Marines – are buried at the British military cemetery at Wayne's Keep.

But that now lies in the UN buffer zone between Greek and Turkish factions, making visits almost impossible; the UN reports only one visitor per week on average.

Accordingly, a two-pronged approach is being taken, with a new memorial to be erected in the old British cemetery in Kyrenia and a memorial book being placed in the British church close to Wayne's Keep.

The grey granite memorial will list the names of those who died between April 1 1955 and April 18 1959, the majority aged 21 or under, in the bloody clashes which led up to independence in 1960.

Memorial builders H L Perfit of Diss will also work with local craftsmen to restore the cemetery, including the provision of new wrought-iron gates and walkways.

The memorial book will be a traditional Roll of Honour, hand-inscribed on vellum pages.

The cost of £200,000 is to be met entirely from public donations, and organisers are currently planning to unveil and dedicate the memorial on November 8.

For more details of the project and how to take part, see www.britishcyprusmemorial.org

HQ ceremony

THE new headquarters of the RNA have been officially opened in Portsmouth.

Naval Base Commander Cdre Rob Thompson formally greeted HQ staff and guests at the new accommodation in Semaphore Tower.

The new RNA HQ address is Room 209, Semaphore Tower, PP70, HM Naval Base Portsmouth, PO1 3LT, and the telephone number of reception is 023 9272 3823.

£50 PRIZE PUZZLE



THE mystery ship in our December edition (right) was HMS Rhyl, correctly identified by Mr H Downey, of Gateshead, who wins our £50 prize.

This month's vessel (above), really is a submarine (apologies for the glitch in last month's answer, and thank you to those who pointed out RFA Wave Sovereign was not a submarine...)

Her name is familiar in the current Navy as it anticipates the arrival of the first-of-class of a new generation of Fleet submarines.

What name does the new vessel share with this boat, launched in World War 2 and pictured in 1969, shortly before she was scrapped?

Complete the coupon and send it to Mystery Picture, Navy News,



HMS Nelson, Portsmouth PO1 3HH. Coupons giving the correct answer will go into a prize draw to establish a winner.

Closing date for entries is March 13. More than one entry can be submitted, but photocopies cannot be accepted. Do not include anything else in your envelope: no correspondence can be entered into and no entry returned.

The winner will be announced in our April edition. The competition is not open to Navy News employees or their families.

MYSTERY PICTURE 168

Name

Address

My answer

Another triumph for organisers

MORE than 200 Plymouth members and their guests attended the annual branch dinner dance, once again held in the WO & SRs Mess at HMS Drake by kind permission of mess president 'Tansy' Lees.

Among those present were the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress of the city, Cllr Brian Vincent and Pauline Murphy, branch president Cdre Ian Jess and his wife Claire, while the Rev Mike Brotherton offered spiritual guidance.

Branch chairman S/M Bob Palmer congratulated the Sea Cadets on their turnout and thanked them for attending, thanked the caterers for "an outstanding meal" and also paid tribute to social secretary Sue Gutteridge and her committee for another triumph of organisation.

Mention was also made of Paul and Sonia Murphy who once again raised, with the help of their customers at the Two Trees pub,

£1,000 which the branch will donate to its various chosen charities.

S/M Bob went on to say how delighted he was to be hosting serving RN members from HM ships Chatham, Bulwark, Cornwall, Drake, Raleigh and from Flag Officer Sea Training staff, with their partners, and he hoped it was a trend which would continue.

The evening continued with dancing to popular Plymouth group Le Band.



● Members of Folkestone branch present a cheque for £1,000 to Help for Heroes at the branch's Trafalgar Night dinner. The event was S/M Tam Stallard's last function as chairman of the branch after ten years in the hot seat



Congress for E(TM) fraternity

THE annual E(TM) get-together has been arranged for Thursday February 26 in the Millennium Hall at HMS Collingwood.

Apart from the opportunity to meet up with old friends from across the specialisation, the conference will present E(TMs) with valuable information on key issues and topics within the training management profession.

The conference format will be based around presentations from both E(TM)s and from external speakers, with topics ranging from modernising training to career development.

There will also be an opportunity to ask those killer questions at a Q&A session with the TMAP board at the close of the session.

At the close of the formal business and presentations, the social events will begin; five-a-side and volleyball tournaments are due to be staged followed by the bi-annual mess dinner extravaganza, complete with mess games.

The cost of £10 covers lunch, tea and coffee, and the mess dinner – lunch only is available for £3.

If anyone has not yet received information on the event, or needs further details, contact Lt Cdr Beasty Williams on 93825 2251 or Lt Roy Grinsill on 93825 2376.

Don't know? Ask your DO!

IF YOU would like more information on:

■ Helping out at this year's Wimbledon tennis championship

see...
RNTM 001/09 Service Support to the All England Lawn Tennis Championship at Wimbledon

■ The latest advice on JPA expense claims and auditing requirements

see...
002/09 JPA I-Expenses, Auditing, Receipts and Fraud
■ Warfare Branch promotion

see...
007/09 Warfare Branch AB2 to AB1 and LH Substantive Promotion Routine

■ How you can wear uniform ashore

see...
Galaxy 16/08 Naval Service Policy on Wearing Uniform Ashore and Wearing of CS95

■ How to qualify as a sports coach

see...
2009DIN10-003 Training courses – Physical Training, Proficiency, Coaching and Officiating

Your Divisional Officer should be able to help with any of these issues.

Take to the skies

THE Guild of Air Pilots and Air Navigators (GAPAN) is finalising its scholarships programme for 2009.

There are at least six private pilot's licences (PPLs) up for grabs, plus various flying instructor and other courses.

For more details and closing dates see website www.gapan.org/careers/scholarships/schols09.htm



New forum seeks total equality

THE Naval Service LGBT Forum was launched to support and represent all Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual and Transgender personnel in the Naval Service, and held its first meeting in December.

The Forum currently comprises ten committee members who mirror a cross section of RN/RM personnel, the Forum wishes to have a serving heterosexual member in attendance.

There are representatives at Junior Rate, Senior Rate and Officer level, along with members from the Reserve Service, Chaplaincy Service, RMs and Service Transgender community.

This will allow the Forum to truly reflect their ambition of total equality.

The Forum aspires to not only represent the Naval Service LGBT community but also to ensure that Divisional Officers, line managers and equality and diversity advisors

have an avenue through which they can seek advice and have access to the latest information on policy, legislation and news.

The Forum is already working closely with the Navy Command Equality and Diversity Policy team, and four Forum members have shared their experiences and expertise with the Equality and Human Rights Commission, explaining life in the RN before, during and after the policy change; they have also provided input for presentations and briefings for senior officer attendance at LGBT-related conferences.

It is the first time since the ban on homosexuality in the Armed Forces was lifted nearly a decade ago that such a group has existed.

Chairwoman of the Forum Lt Cdr Mandy McBain said: "At present the Naval Service doesn't monitor sexual orientation, so there's no way of knowing how



● Lt Cdr Mandy McBain

big the community is.

"As the Chair, I hold a list of the LGBT community who've volunteered their information to me in order that they are kept up-to-date about conferences, news and articles of interest.

"Many of them have also volunteered to be mentors if line

managers, LGBT personnel or potential recruits need advice or support."

The Service recruits from all walks of life, so the Forum believes it probably has the same proportion of gay personnel within the 34,000 people as the national average, which is about eight per cent.

In the decade since the change in policy, civilian firms have been amazed at the progress the Naval Service has made, especially with the unique challenges it faces.

The Service works closely with Stonewall, a charity that campaigns for equality of opportunity and treatment for LGB personnel, and is a member of the Stonewall Diversity Champions programme.

As a Diversity Champion the Naval Service ranks among over 400 other high-calibre public and private sector employers, and has the opportunity to learn best practice on sexual orientation

policy from other members.

Lt Cdr McBain has been invited to act as a panel member at its annual conference next month.

Many private sector employers are ahead of the military in the support they offer their LGBT staff and potential recruits and it is these firms against which the Naval Service competes when attracting and retaining the best employees.

Lt Cdr McBain said: "We have made a great deal of progress but the aim now is to keep the momentum going.

"With the formation of the LGBT Forum we hope that this can continue and can be used as a management tool, not only for the community but for the benefit of the wider Service."

If you are interested in adding your details to the LGBT Community list and receiving further information please email nsllgbt@tiscali.co.uk

Meet the board that manages the Navy

THE photograph (right) is the latest portrait of the current members of the Admiralty Board – the Navy's most senior management committee.

It draws its authority from the Queen, through her government and the Defence Council, via statutes and 'letters patent', to have "command over the officers, ratings and marines of Her Majesty's naval and marine forces".

The Board is also responsible for every issue relating to the Naval Service, although in practice, these responsibilities are delegated to the Navy Board.

The Admiralty Board meets in the Admiralty Board Room in the old Admiralty Building, Whitehall – the same room that has been used for this meeting since 1788.

The room is steeped in tradition, and is home to several works of art and traditional artefacts, including a portrait of Nelson and a fully-working wind dial that dates from 1708.

The dial is connected to a weather vane on the roof of the building, next to a semaphore station that connected the Admiralty Board directly to the Fleet in Portsmouth via a system of semaphore towers.

The towers included a number of churches that still fly the White Ensign to commemorate the fact, and it used to take just 12 minutes to send a message from the Board Room to the Fleet.

With a clock from 1697, oak panelling dating from 1720 and the board room table and chairs dating from about 1788, there is a strict no-smoking rule in the room that even Winston Churchill obeyed.

These days, the Board meets just once a year, and it is used as an opportunity to discuss key



● Seated from left: Vice Admiral Trevor Soar, Chief of Fleet Support; Rear Admiral Paul Lambert, Controller of the Navy; Ursula Brennan, 2nd Permanent Under-Secretary; Admiral Sir Jonathon Band, First Sea Lord; Bob Ainsworth MP, Minister of State for the Armed Forces, John Hutton MP, Secretary of State for Defence (Chairman); Quentin Davies MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence and Minister for Defence Equipment & Support; Baroness Ann Taylor, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence and Minister for International Defence and Security; Admiral Sir Mark Stanhope, Commander-in-Chief Fleet; Vice Admiral Alan Massey, Second Sea Lord; Rear Admiral Bob Cooling, Assistant Chief of the Naval Staff. Standing, from left: Lt Oliver Hucker, Flag Lieutenant to First Sea Lord; Capt Steve Murdoch, Executive Assistant to First Sea Lord; Robert Wilton, Assistant Personal Secretary to the Secretary of State for Defence; Roy Brown, Deputy Director Naval Staff

issues and how the Board intends to develop the Navy of the future, as well as any specific business that the members wish to draw to Ministers' attention, or to consider anything that the Ministers themselves may have raised.

The day-to-day business of running the Service is delegated

to the Navy Board, which includes all the members of the Admiralty Board but without the Ministers.

The Navy Board supports the First Sea Lord in his roles as the Navy's representative on the senior Defence committees and to provide advice to Ministers.

The Navy Board considers

any subject that might have an impact on the current or future business of the Service, and each meeting will include updates on operations as well as programmes and projects.

These meetings are less formal than the Admiralty Board but still use the traditional board room.

Silver ship has been in the wars

TROPHY 8998 is a silver model of the George, Admiral Robert Blake's flagship and the ship in which he died in 1657.

Four years before his death, in February 1653, Blake and Admiral Richard Deane jointly led a force of 80 ships into action against a similar number of Dutch warships commanded by Admiral Marten Tromp, escorting a convoy of 150 merchant ships.

The action started near Portland on February 18 and lasted three days.

Tromp skilfully protected the convoy and reached safety, losing 11 warships, 30 merchantmen and almost 2,000 men.

Blake, who lost one ship and nearly 1,000 men, had to break off as his ships ran out of

ammunition, but his successful action proved to be a turning point in the First Dutch War.

During a subsequent war with Spain (1656-7) Blake blockaded the enemy coast so successfully that a Spanish treasure fleet put into the Canary Islands instead.

When Blake found out, he destroyed the fleet at the Battle of Santa Cruz on April 20 1657. It was to be Blake's final triumph – in failing health he died at sea off Plymouth.

The model of the George was presented to the cruiser HMS Blake by her builders, Fairfield's in 1961. At some time it sustained serious damage but, thanks to the skill of Adrian Ayling, of Ayling Jewellers, Fareham, it has now been restored to its former glory.



● The silver model of the George

COMPENSATION payments for the most serious injuries to Services personnel have been doubled to a new maximum lump sum of £570,000.

All injured personnel who have received an award under the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme will receive an increase of between ten and 100 per cent to their tax-free lump sum payment.

For the most seriously injured, this is in addition to their tax-free index-linked Guaranteed Income Payment that is paid monthly for life after leaving the Forces.

The 140 most seriously injured have been contacted with details of their increased compensation payments, and were due to receive their additional money within days of the announcement being made on December 15 last year.

Those less seriously injured will receive their additional compensation in the near future.

In total more than £10m in additional compensation will be paid to approximately 2,700 injured Servicemen and women.

The MoD announced the intention to increase the lump sum compensation payments as part of the Service Personnel Command Paper, published last July.

The paper – *The Nation's Commitment: Cross-Government Support to our Armed Forces, their Families and Veterans* – outlined a package of 40 new measures to improve the lives of Service personnel, their families and veterans.

This is the first time that such a cross-Government strategy has been issued, and it sets the standard for the level and scope of support Service personnel can expect.

Under-Secretary of State for Defence Kevan Jones said: "Our Armed Forces are inspirational and they deserve the very best support – that is why I am determined to see through the package of measures we announced in the Service Personnel Command paper.

"This increase in our compensation package will be a great boost to our injured personnel and their families."

Chris Simpkins, Director General of the RBL, said: "We are very happy that the MOD listened to the concerns outlined in the Legion's 'Honour the Covenant' campaign and that today, in respect to improvements to compensation arrangements for those with conditions relating to Service, the Government's promises are being implemented."

All future compensation claims made under the scheme will be processed using the enhanced tariff amounts.



● Tilly Clifton

Tilly wins reward for getting the mail through

STAFF at the BFPO are getting their breath back after another typically manic Christmas period.

And for one of them, the New Year brought a special delivery in the form of an MBE.

The British Forces Post Office works full tilt in the festive period to cope with the huge increase in the volume of mail handled.

Well in advance of Christmas, Mrs Tilly Clifton, the Ships Section Manager and Air Programmer in the BFPO's Fleet Mail Office, began liaising with ships due to be deployed over the festive period to ensure BFPO was as up-to-date as possible over the proposed whereabouts of ships.

All mail received up to the Christmas week was processed in the BFPO HQ sorting office at Northolt and was despatched on time.

When the BFPO sorting office closed on Christmas Eve, all mail had been dispatched; during that final week, BFPO processed 161,233 packets to Operations Telic and Herrick alone.

For deployed ships, the BFPO Ships Section completed 201 dispatches in November and December totalling 1,363 bags or 9,672kg of mail.

The single biggest dispatch was to Dubai for HMS Northumberland on December 21 – 156 bags which reached the ship for Christmas.

That kind of dedication paid dividends for Tilly Clifton, who was awarded an MBE in recognition for the outstanding job she has done in supporting the RN for 11 years as Air Programmer and Section Manager.

A number of personnel have asked for an update on the policy on unsolicited mail, or mail sent to operational theatre without a name in the address.

The National Recognition Study, published in May 2008, suggested that members of the public, charities, companies and the media might wish to send parcels to members of the Armed Forces on operations.

A working group from the DE&S considered the impact on the supply chain of accepting parcels to unnamed personnel and concluded that it could not be supported.

While such items were appreciated, the increased volume placed a strain on the supply chain, entailing extra helicopter flights in dangerous conditions which could put lives at risk as well as slowing the flow of mail from friends and relatives.

Some items would be available in theatre anyway, or available through alternative routes, and there was also a need to focus on operational supplies such as ammunition, rations, equipment and medical supplies.

The working group has recommended that alternative arrangements should be explored, in liaison with charities, to allow the public to show their support for the Armed Forces.

Prosecuting body 'wholly independent'

A NEW independent prosecuting authority has been set up as a result of changes to the three Service Discipline Acts.

As of January 1, the Director of Service Prosecutions (DSP), Bruce Houlder QC, headed up the new Service Prosecuting Authority (SPA), the umbrella grouping of the three individual Service authorities.

Although the DSP and his deputy, Brig Philip McEvoy of the Army Legal Services, will act under the general superintendence of the Attorney General, he will act wholly independently from the chain of command, and will be free of all outside influences in his decision-making.

Since taking up his post in May 2008, the new DSP has been given a thorough grounding in relevant aspects of Service life and discipline, as well as the operational work of the three Services in the UK and abroad.

It is anticipated that in October 2009, Parliament will implement the provisions of the Armed Forces Act 2006 in full.

This will introduce a new system of Service law, and a single court martial for all trials of criminal and disciplinary offences referred to the SPA.

This is a landmark piece of legislation, and is the culmination of a thorough review of military justice commenced by the Strategic Defence Review in 1998.

The SPA's Mission Statement is as follows: "Led by the Director of Service Prosecutions, the Service Prosecuting Authority is a Tri-Service organisation that provides for the independent, efficient and consistent consideration of criminal cases and offences contrary to military discipline.

"It will initiate prosecutions where justified and conduct fair and thorough proceedings in the Service courts of first instance and the Service appellate courts, whilst liaising effectively with the police and dealing with prosecution witnesses and victims of crime with care and sensitivity.

"Whilst maintaining independence from the service chain of command, the Service Prosecuting Authority fulfils its functions in support of operational effectiveness of the Armed Forces throughout the world".

The review concluded that combining the Service Discipline Acts into a single act, and reducing the differences between the systems to the absolute minimum, would better support the Forces.

The work of SPA will underpin a fresh, accountable approach to the administration of criminal justice for those under military law.

SPA is the culmination of a gradual process of evolution, moulded by an ever-increasing body of rights-based judicial decisions, and by a recognition that there needs to be a modern prosecution service that will serve the public at large and the military in particular; and which will continue to underpin the strong disciplinary imperatives and operational readiness of the modern armed services.

As part of the work of SPA will inevitably involve cases arising in the course of joint military operations abroad, the creation of this new authority is a further reflection of the increasing need for a tri-Service framework.

In becoming the guarantor of fair and evidence-based disciplinary

and criminal process, the SPA will introduce streamlined working practices for the preparation and presentation of cases.

Regular training will ensure a strong body of experienced prosecutors for the future.

SPA will also work closely through the Provost Marshals of the three Services to encourage consistent and efficient working arrangements between the independent Service police forces and the new authority.

Bruce Houlder said: "A comparatively tiny number of criminal acts have marred the deserved and honourable reputation of Her Majesty's Armed Services in recent years.

"Sound lessons, and clear new training directions, have sought to banish poor discipline and bad practice from all branches of the Services."

He added: "I have tried to reassure COs wherever I have gone, that whilst I clearly have my job to do, I am also here to support the operational effectiveness of HM Armed Forces.

"This requires me to understand

the context in which actions and decisions are performed and made.

"It will be no part of my role to 'second guess' a decision made in good faith, and a decision perceived by the Serviceman to be the correct decision at the time, provided that it was based on an honest judgement of the legal circumstances he faced at the time.

"This will be so whatever the consequences.

"Mistakes are made however hard we try to avoid them.

"Crime and serious breaches of discipline, including neglect of duty, tend to advertise themselves clearly, and it is this that I will be concerned with.

"The law is not there to punish the honest, or those who have tried to do their duty, or those who act properly in performance of their duty yet make errors, and I shall see to the best of my ability that this does not happen."

On the Royal Navy, Mr Houlder said: "The Royal Navy has responded exceptionally to the need for someone in my position to have a full picture of the different nature of the Navy's work.

"I have visited most naval bases in the UK and the Maritime Component in Bahrain.

"I have seen the Marines in training and in operational theatre, and have spent time talking and learning with Naval officers and ratings at sea and on land, and on an SSBN as well.

"I feel most privileged to be allowed to attach myself to such a great and honourable tradition."

Captains of industry try Navy methods

A LEADING business organisation has turned to the Silent Service to help hone bosses' teamwork skills.

Midlands members of Vistage International, which bills itself as "the world's leading chief executive organisation", travelled to Clyde Naval Base for a three-day retreat.

There the bosses watched officers and ratings taking part in damage control exercises in Fleet submarine HMS Sceptre and bomber HMS Victorious.

The visitors were let loose on a submarine simulator where they were told to stabilise their boat following a torpedo attack.

The visitors also learned about the role played by the RNR in military and civilian life.

Vistage chairman Richard Ward said: "As business leaders and Vistage members we pride ourselves on our teamwork and leadership prowess.

"The officers of the Royal Navy showed us how these skills come into play at the highest levels.

"Throughout our retreat, we were extremely impressed at the standard of training and professionalism of all those involved, and how their magnificent teamwork empowered them to deal with a series of potentially-serious incidents."

Online clothing order system goes on trial

ROYAL Navy personnel in HMS Ocean and at RN air station Yeovilton are testing a new project which could revolutionise the supply of military clothing.

Since last month members of the Logs and Executive department and 815 Naval Air Squadron have been using elements of the New Clothing Solution (NCS) project.

Under NCS personnel will be able to order clothing via the Internet and have it delivered to an address of their choice.

Planners said NCS is in its early concept stage and there is much work to do to develop a case for change.

Integrating the different elements of the supply chain, from manufacturing to ordering, could bring business benefits for the MOD.

Parts of the supply chain and associated systems have been modernised over the years, but this project looks at the whole clothing supply chain.

A major part of the new approach is the pilot of an online catalogue. Army personnel have been testing the pilot since March 2008 and it was rolled out to selected naval units last month to understand the specific needs of the Navy.

This pilot is an important element in project development work, helping the project team understand how an online ordering system affects the customer and the people, organisations, and processes involved in the supply chain.

A range of common clothing items have been included in the pilot catalogue, including No 3s general working rig, No 4s action working dress, C95, a range of associated badges, insignia and accoutrements, footwear and

tropical kit.

Clothing Online shows what, and how many, items of clothing to which an individual is entitled.

This personalised catalogue is based on an individual's rank, rate, role and function.

Personnel are allocated a points credit against which they can order clothing or, where the user is not entitled to free exchange, they can purchase items with their personal credit card.

Nominated unit NCS administrators can allocate more points to entitled personnel if necessary.

All Clothing Online users are asked to complete a satisfaction survey once they have received their order.

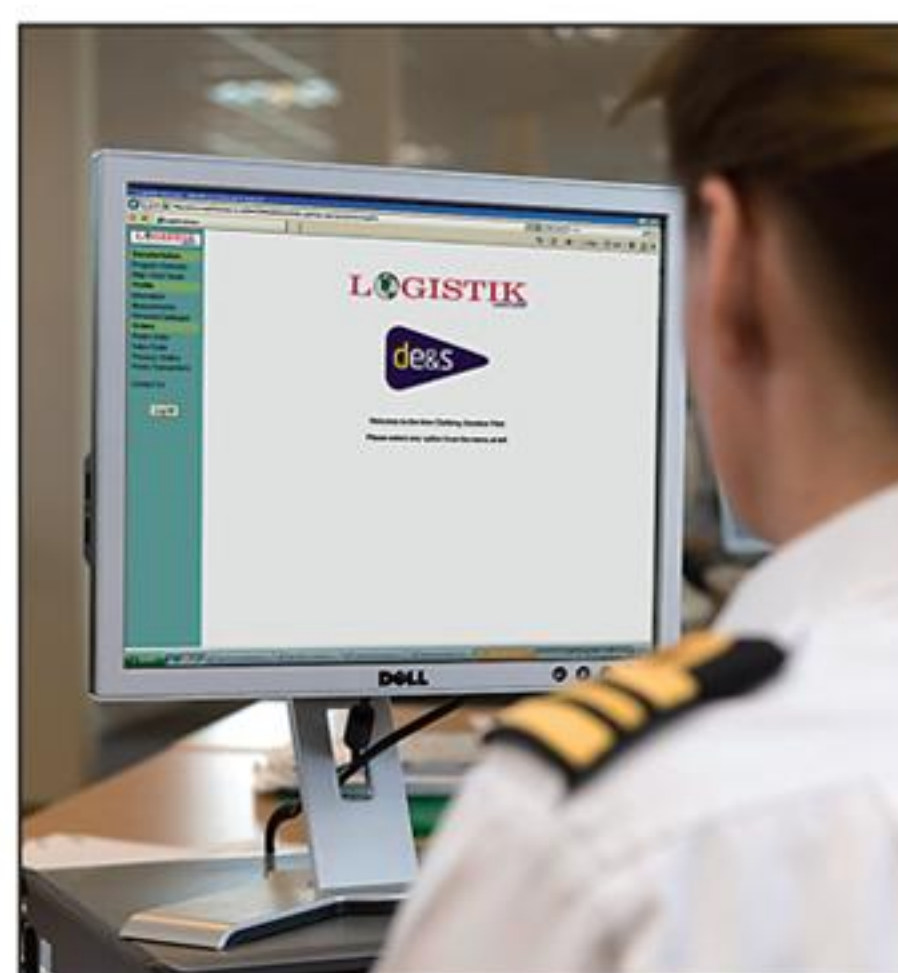
The project team then compares the pilot system feedback to feedback on the current clothing stores system.

All Navy personnel can give their views on the current clothing store system by completing the survey on RNCom – www.rncom.mod.uk/

Canadian company Logistik Unicorp is providing the Clothing Online catalogue and help desk for the pilot.

It has provided a similar service for Canadian forces for the past seven years.

DSDA provides warehousing and distribution, with staff at Bicester clothing warehouses picking and packing orders.



● Online ordering of clothing is under trial

Parcelforce will deliver the orders to the pilot users' chosen address, be it home, unit or any other convenient location.

For those in deployed ships the BFPO mail service will be used.

Potential benefits for military personnel include:

■ Easier, more convenient access to clothing;

■ A personalised clothing catalogue;

■ More control over clothing;

■ Better-fitting clothing;

■ More convenient delivery.

For more details, contact:

■ Mrs Stephanie Hyde, NCS

Pilot Deputy Project Manager, tel (9355) 68859, email stephanie.hyde121@mod.uk

or

■ Mr John Nother, Logs Spt

Commodities SO1, Ext (93832) 5884, email John.Nother280@mod.uk

Reservists visit old battlefields of Baltic

HISTORIC clashes and current operations were to the fore at the fifth battlefield tour undertaken by RN reservists from HMS President in London.

A group of 30 officers and ratings travelled to Tallinn and Helsinki to focus on the Royal Navy's Baltic campaign of 1918-20.

That saw Rear Admiral Walter Cowan support the Baltic states' struggle for independence from the Bolsheviks – a campaign which remains almost unknown in the UK, even amongst serving RN personnel, even though the Senior Service lost at least ten ships and 107 sailors.

As well as studying the naval campaign, with visits to various historical sites in Tallinn, the tour party was also hosted by both the Estonian and Finnish navies.

The Finnish element saw a visit to the Upinniemi naval base and 7 Missile Squadron, followed by a wreath-laying ceremony at the Finnish National War Cemetery.

It culminated in a visit to the Finnish Naval Academy in Helsinki, with the British group travelling there on Jumo-class fast landing craft.

Throughout the visit the British reservists were accompanied by officers from the Finnish equivalent.

Back in Tallinn, after the HMS President group laid wreaths in the Anglican Church and at the military cemetery, the Estonian Navy took over hosting duties.

There was a presentation on the navy and a tour of minehunter ENS Admiral Cowan – recently more familiar in UK waters as HMS Sandown.

An exchange of ship's badges further reinforced the spirit of goodwill.

Throughout the weekend the British had the opportunity to explore the cobbled streets and picturesque squares of Old Tallinn and to enjoy the lively nightlife, which included meals in traditional Estonian restaurants and a visit to a not-so-traditional (for Eastern European, anyway) Irish bar.

The battlefield tour was principally organised by Lts Tony Scott and Roddy Urquhart – and as minewarfare reservists they found the visit to Tallinn's mine museum of particular interest.

Lt Scott had only recently returned from an exercise with HMS Hurworth which had been clearing historic ordnance from the coast of nearby Lithuania.

With more than 100,000 mines laid in the Baltic during the two world wars – many remaining unaccounted for – as well as tons of other assorted ordnance such as bombs, shells and torpedoes, it is likely the pair will return to the area again at some point in their careers.

It's your 2-6

NEED to get your message across to the rest of the RN?

To feature in 2-6 contact Lt Cdr Gregor Birse (Fleet Media Ops), 93832 8809.



NOTICEBOARD

1969 1979 1989 THE TIME OF YOUR LIVES

February 1969

DESTROYER HMS Hampshire (right) led seven ships of the Western Fleet to visit five countries in South America.

February 1979

HMS Herald and Fawn broke off from their survey group to fetch Britons and Americans seeking to leave Iran as the revolution took place.

February 1989

'Jenny get your gun' headlined the announcement that WRNS were to be trained in the use of small-arms, although it was possible for existing WRNS to opt out.



Contact sheet

Ministry of Defence: 0870 607 4455, www.mod.uk
 Royal Navy recruitment: 0845 607 5555, www.royalnavy.mod.uk
 Veterans Agency: 0800 169 2277, www.veteransagency.mod.uk
 Medals enquiries: 0800 085 3600
 RN and RM Service records: 023 9262 8779 or 023 9262 8667
 Royal Naval Association: 023 9272 3823,

www.royal-naval-association.co.uk
 RNABT: 023 9269 0112 (general), 023 9266 0296 (grants), www.rnab.org.uk
 British Legion: 08457 725725, www.britishlegion.org.uk
 Naval Families Federation: 023 9265 4374, www.nff.org.uk
 Seafarers UK: 020 7932 0000, www.seafarers-uk.org
 SSAFA Forces Help: 0845 1300 975,

www.ssafa.org.uk
 RN Community: www.rncom.mod.uk
 Royal Naval Museum: 023 9272 7562, www.royalnavalmuseum.org
 Fleet Air Arm Museum: 01935 840565, www.fleetairarm.com
 Royal Marines Museum: 023 9281 9385, www.royalmarinesmuseum.co.uk
 RN Submarine Museum: 023 9252 9217, www.rnsubmus.co.uk
 National Maritime Museum: 020 8312 6565, www.nmm.ac.uk
 Imperial War Museum: 020 7416 5320, www.iwm.org.uk

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Deaths

LET Brent Andrew. HMS Sutherland. His CO Cdr John Payne said: "Brent was an outstanding sailor who set a fine example to all on board. He was a pleasure to serve with and the entire ship's company are shocked by this extremely sad news." He was described as happy, friendly, up-beat, a good strong leader and popular. December 17. Aged 30.
 Lt Mark Anthony Horner. WMO Yeovilton. December 9. Aged 42.

S/Lt John Glanville DSC. Served in Eagle and Formidable on Eastern Mediterranean and Russian convoys. Narrowly avoided invading Germans in Crete and made a dramatic escape in Tobruk by diving into the harbour and swimming to an Army lighter barge that was on fire and sinking. He took charge of the barge and guided it out of the harbour under heavy gunfire where he and 12 survivors were rescued; he was awarded the DSC. December 5. Aged 90.

Fred Priest. AB. Joined Ganges 1942 and served World War 2 in Ashanti (Russian Convoys and relief of Malta) and Chelmer. December 4. Aged 87.

Harry Smith. Two-badge Killick. Aircraft Handler and fireman. Served 1949-62 in Centaur, Ark Royal and finally with 801 Naval Air Squadron on board Bulwark. December 4. Aged 76.

Jack Pleasant. Served 1951-54 in Comus and also Wave on fishery protection. HMS Comus Association. November 22.

William 'Bill' Irving. PO Tel. Joined St Vincent and served 1932-46 in Rodney, Norfolk, Basilisk, Keppel, MSB4 (P39), Kenya (Vaagso Raid), Russian and Atlantic convoys, (Operation Pedestal), Highflyer and Trincomalee. Founder member Kenya Association. November 20. Aged 92.

Cdr Ian 'Scrym' Scrymgeour-Wedderburn. Entered Dartmouth 1936 aged 13 and joined Ajax as a midshipman 1940-42 mainly in the Mediterranean; in 1942-44 on Orwell taking part in ten Arctic convoys. Post war he served in several ships; navigator of Eagle 1954-56 (Suez) and commander RNAS Yeovilton 1961-63; he retired 1967. Actively involved and committee member Stevenage Sea Cadets and vice president Inverness Sea Cadets. July 16. Aged 85.

Reginald Harold Gossage. CPO. Served at Ganges, Glasgow, Nelson, Manchester, Vanguard, Talybont and St Vincent. Member of the Ganges and Manchester associations. November 23. Aged 88.

Geoffrey Upton. POAF. Served 1941-45. Survived torpedoing of troop ship on route to Singapore and ended up in Africa. Fleet Air Arm Association (Daedalus branch). October 10.

Lt Stephen Barr. Pilot. Served 1940-46 flying Swordfish from MAC Ships operating in the Atlantic. Fleet Air Arm Association (Ford, Peregrine branch). November 25.

Ron West. Chief ERA. Served in Nelson (1941-42), Oakley (Russian and Malta Convoys), Whitshed, Nadine, Mull of Kintyre Commonwealth Japan, Aurora, Sulva, Adamant, Charity, Morecambe Bay, Hornet, Bellerophon, Sultan and Victory. Loch Fada Association. November 6. Aged 88.

Ronald 'Ron' Bowron. Two-badge Yeoman. Served 1940-54. Trained as a Boy Sailor at St George (Isle of Man) then to King George V as a Boy Signaller on Arctic convoys. Signaller in Forester 1942, Mid Ocean Escort Group C1 and in the Channel for D-Day, Boxer (1944-46), Afrikander (Simonstown), Zephyr and Rinaldo (fishery protection). December 14. Aged 84.

William Joseph 'Griff' Griffin. Acting PO Steward. Joined as a Boy and served 13 years in Ceres, Goldcrest, Illustrious, Drake, Victorious, St Vincent, Wakeful, Afrikander and Tiger; also personal steward to Lord Louis Mountbatten at Broadlands. November 30. Aged 73.

Michael John Padginton. LRO. Served 1961-71 at Ganges, Mercury and Plover, Ajax, Brave Borderer, Brave Swordsman, Bulwark, Wiston, Brown Ranger and seconded (HMAS) Teal. December 2. Aged 62.

Ken Sims DSM. Aircrewman 1 Observer. Served 1939-53. Former Telegraphist Air Gunner NAS 812, 815, 820, 821 and 827; Illustrious, Indefatigable, Triumph and Glory (Korea) and several Air Stations and Shore Establishments. Early member of Telegraphist Air Gunner's and 14th Carrier Air Group Associations. November 23. Aged 87.

Betty Oldham (née Walron). Wren Supply Assistant (Victualling). Duties included issuing rum ration. Served 1944-46 at Excellent. November 28. Aged 83.

William Edward 'Bill' James. CPO Shipwright. Joined Royal Hospital School Holbrook aged 11 and Figgard aged 15. Series 08 entry. Served 1950-74 in Triumph, Diligence, Albion, Victory Barracks, Vidal, Sultan, Mauritius, Neptune, Exmouth and Sultan (1979-89). Small boats shipwright at Dolphin until its closure. Secretary to the Royal British Legion Fly Fishing section, Park Gate branch for 27 years. December 16. Aged 74.

Hon Captain Colin White RNR. Worked at the RN Museum from 1975 becoming deputy director and head of museum services 1995 and director in June 2006. Appointed chairman of the Official Nelson Celebrations Committee charged with co-ordinating the Trafalgar Festival and in 2001 he was seconded to the National Maritime Museum as director of its 2005 initiatives including an exhibition 'Nelson and Napoleon', publications and special events and was vice-president of the Navy Records Society. December 25. Aged 57.

Peter LeBreton. CPO(L). Served 1959-96 at Collingwood and in Orion, Woolwich, Diana, Victorious, Tiger, Blake, Diamond (training ship), Lowestoft, Coventry, Challenger, Beaver and Exeter. December

29. Aged 68.
 Peter 'Mac' McSweeney. CPO. RN Diver. Served 1937-71. Boy Seaman Caledonia training ship and 1st class Navy diver in Malta 1942. January 4.

Edward Henry Jones. AB. Served 1940-45 in HMS Birmingham. October 17. Aged 86.

Tony Whitmore. AB and C/D3 (1952). Served 1948-57 at Ganges and Portland Clearance Diving Team; took part in the film *Above us - The Waves* and worked on sunken submarine Sidon. December 12. Aged 76.

David 'Cads' Cadwallader. POMEM(M). Served 1951-84 in Unicorn, Orion, Alania, Cockade, Barrosa, Chaser, Duncan, Forth, Wiston, Hubberton, Gavinton, Wakeful, Cuxton, Shavington and Pollington. December 20. Aged 76.

Walter Coniber. Served in Diana 1957-58 as a National Serviceman and a member of the association. November. Aged 73.

Frank 'Nobby' Clarke. Sto.1. Served in Nelson and Serene (1944-47). HMS Serene Association. Aged 81.

Jim Worrell. AB. Sailed to Canada on D-Day to join Serene and served in her 1944-47. HMS Serene Association. December 24. Aged 82.

Ted King. AB. Served at Collingwood and in Berwick, Ramillies and Loch Fada; also member of Loch Fada Association. January 7.

Tony Bunton. LRO(G). Joined Ganges 1963 then Mercury and Cavalier. Fearless and Hermes. Served in Singapore handing over the communications centre to the Australian and New Zealand Navies. December 24. Aged 60.

Diana 'Taff' Hopson. Wren Air Mech. Served 1961-67 at Abbotsinch, Culdrose and Yeovilton; also served in RNR Cambria and retired as RPO. RNR Cardiff branch. September in Spain.

Lt Cdr (SCC) T K Griffiths. Served 38 years with the Sefton Unit, TS Starling until his retirement in 1994. December 25. Aged 79.

Jackie Shinn. Served in Ramillies (1940-42), LCTS (42-46). Northern club land comedian and film parts in several northern based dramas. December 25. Aged 85.

Lawrence 'Taff' West. CPOMEA. Served in submarine Sovereign. January 1.

ROYAL NAVAL ASSOCIATION

Audrey M Kent. Associate member Beccles branch. November 30. Aged 92.

David John Weston. Able Seaman. Served 1944-47 at Royal Arthur, Glendower, Collingwood, Victory, St Angelo (Malta), MTB 655, Deane, and Mauritius. Kingston upon Thames RNA and also Coastal Forces Veterans Association. October 23. Aged 83.

Tom Cartwright. Stoker. Served 1943-46. Kingston-upon-Thames. November 11. Aged 83.

Ray Higginbotham. SBA in WW2. Served in Glendower, Gosling, Hawkins, RNH Haslar, HMAH Kingseat and LSTs 402 and 239. March RNA. December 15.

Cyril Parrett. AB. Served in Landing Craft and Valiant in the Indian Ocean region during WW2. Liss and District branch. December 18. Aged 83.

Frank Alvey. Bourne RNA.
 Bernard Tilley. Bourne RNA.
 Bill Lewis. Bourne RNA.

Thomas Redfern. POA(AH). Served RN 1941-47 and FAA 1947-70. RN Commando D-Brigade at Salerno, Anzio, Elba, Holland and ships Beagle, Centurion, Saunter, Caprice, Theseus, Warrior, Glory, Illustrious, Centaur and Ark Royal. Redcar & District branch. December 13. Aged 83.

Joyce Palmer. Associate member Market Harborough branch. November. Aged 78.

Fred Moseley DSM. AB. Portsmouth division. Served in Combined Operations Husky Division in LCTs during WW2 receiving his decoration in the Sicily campaign for rescuing soldiers from a blazing ammunition ship moored near his LCT at great risk to himself. In the 1990s he was secretary to the Management Committee of the Staines Sea Cadets. Hanworth RNA. December 18. Aged 84.

Arthur Willis. Ldg Seaman Torp. Joined the RNRV in 1939. Trained at Skegness when war started and was a Chatham rating. Served in Chakdina an old coal burning merchant ship refitted in Bombay to be an armed boarding vessel patrolling the Red Sea when on her passage from Tobruk to Alexandria she was hit by torpedoes and sank in two minutes; Bellona on Arctic convoys and was also present at D-Day landings. Started the Bellona Reunion Association. Hanworth RNA. December 7. Aged 87.

Jim Silver RM. Marine. Joined in 1943 and served in Venerable in the Far East as air gunner AA3. Upon leaving in 1948 he joined the RFR. Sometime member of Staines Sea Cadet Management Committee. Hanworth RNA. December 15. Aged 83.

Percy Dunn. AB. Ganges Boy served 1938-53 in Southampton and survived her sinking. Pembroke, Delhi and Sheffield. Swindon branch. December 25. Aged 86.

Dennis 'Danny' George Anscombe. CPO Cox'n. Served 1937-63. Ships included Kelvin. Caerphilly RNA. December 31. Aged 86.

Herbert 'Bert' Hewitt RM. Served 1944-46 in Warspite and was involved in the bombardment of Sword and Gold Beach during D-Day landings manning one of its 15-inch guns; then in Australia for the preparations of the invasion of Japan; he served on various carriers in the Far East. After demob he returned to Australia in 1951 and joined the Royal Australian Army for six years completing his duty on the personal staff of Field Marshal Sir William Slim, the then Governor General of Australia. Canberra RNA. December 30 in Sydney. Aged 82.

Harold 'Steve' Knagg. PO Coxswain

Submarines. St Vincent Boy. Served 1951-64 in Implacable, Zodiac, Indefatigable, Drake, Eagle, Vernon, Osprey, Dolphin and submarines Taciturn (Australia), Token and Alcide. Selsey RNA and Selsey RBL Club. December 12. Aged 72.

John W Perry RM. Cpl. Served 1941-54 in Nile (Egypt), Carlisle, 40 Commando (Italy), 45 Commando (Hong Kong), RM Police Commando School and Cleopatra. Harrogate & District branch. December 30. Aged 85.

Thomas 'Tommy' Brown. Leading Stoker. Served in Duke, Pembroke III, Beaver II, Naval Fire Service at Killingholme oil fuel depot, HMS Northey II (Hayling Island), (Quebec-Copra) code names for Combined Ops, Warsash Depot Roseneath. Bolton RNA. January 7. Aged 85.

Peter Alan 'Mac' McDonald. CPOGI. Served 1949-75 in St Vincent, Wrangler, Loch Alvie, Pembroke, Superb, Obdurate, Neptune, Decoy, Royal Arthur, Collingwood, Ark Royal, Excellent, Rame Head, Narvik, St Angelo (Malta), Aurora, Ganges, Zulu, Cambridge and Diomedea. Member of WRVS (Emergency Services), RAOB, Chatham and Portsmouth GI's Association, Chatham Naval Officers Association, St Vincent Association, Ganges Association and Chatham RNA. January 8. Aged 76.

Ron Stockton. Ldg Tel. Served 1946-54 in Excalibur, Cookham Camp (WT Training), St Kitts, Superb (cruiser) and Tamar (WT Station Hong Kong) and Loch Killisport. Lincoln branch. December 31. Aged 80.

Jack Mitchell. Served during WW2 in Foam and Glengyle. Skipton and District branch. January 3. Aged 87.

Stanley Scarsbrook. Stoker. Served 1939-45 including Vengeance. Chairman Carterton RNA for 25 years. January 6. Aged 85.

Kenneth Craig Kernohan. Served in Sherwaton on Atlantic convoy duties. Active member of Crawley RNA since the fifties. December. Aged 82.

ASSOCIATION OF RN OFFICERS

Rear Admiral J H Adams CB LVO. Served Dolphin, President, Britannia, Adamant, Osprey, President and Albion.

Lt K G Coleman. Served in Tiptoe, Rorqual, Onslaught, Dolphin and Victory.

Lt Cdr J G deB Colpoys. Served in Howe, Belfast, Kent, Watchman, Vengeance, Childers, Gambia, Duchess and Lochinvar.

Lt D H Duffy. Served in Welcome, Indefatigable and Temeraire.

Capt D Evans. Served in Dainty, President, Girdle Ness, Collingwood and Fife.

Rear Admiral Sir Paul Greening GCVO. Served in Rifleman, Asheldham, Gamecock, Loch Killisport, Urchin, Lewiston, Albion, Jaguar, Terror, Centurion and Flag Officer Royal Yacht.

Capt S D Hunsley JP. Served in Cleopatra, St Angelo, Lochinvar, HMAS Leewind, Victory, Meon, Pembroke, Victorious, Bulwark and Neptune.

Capt R W Lumley-Harvatt RM

Cdr J E Maidwell. Served in Indefatigable, Ganges, Duchess, Battleaxe, Dolphin, Phoenixia and Victory.

SUBMARINES ASSOCIATION

Tim Coop. LCEM. Served in submarines 1967-75 in Churchill, Valiant and Sovereign. Barrow branch. Aged 60.

J 'John' Crisford. PO Tel. Served in submarines WW2 in H28, Unbroken and Thule. Australia branch. Aged 93.

A 'Alan' Easterbrook. L/Sea. UW2. Served in submarines 1955-63 in Sleuth, Sentinel, Artemis and Porpoise. South Kent branch. Aged 72.

F A 'Francis' Grice. AB ST. Served in submarines 1942-46 in Ultimatum, Upstart and Untiring. Bury branch. Aged 85.

A D 'Alex' Swinton. CPO Coxn. Served in submarines 1950-70 in Andrew, Tireless, Thermopylae, Astute, Tally-Ho, Sea Devil, Truncheon and Porpoise. Scottish branch. Aged 78.

LST & LANDING CRAFT ASSOCIATION

Mrs D M Hale. Served on board HMS Glendower.

F W Burton. Served on board LSI(L) Monowai, LCAs off and LSI(M) Princess Beatrix. November 10.

T G Cartwright. Served on board LBO 29, LBW 19 and LCT 478. November 11.

A T Wilmot. Served on board LCT 1152 and LCT 1333. November 17.

John Answorth. Served on board LCT 7077. November 15.

Ray Higginbotham. Served on board LST 239 and Hawkins. December 15.

F Moseley. Served on board LCT 325. December 18.

Fred Jackson. Served on board LCI(L)s 250, and 318, LCs 422 and 724. December 19.

HMS WIZARD & HMS CADIZ ASSOCIATION

Arthur Willcock. ME1. Served in Wizard, Cadiz, Sluys and submarines. Aged 75.

Bob Paterson. AB LTO. Served in Implacable and Roberts. December 5. Aged 85.

Stan Hughes. PO ST. Served in Wizard, Cadiz and Sluys. December 6. Aged 75.

Marie Hughes. Widow of Stan Hughes. December 20.

Vera Binks. Widow of late Gordon Binks. September 21.

ALGERINES ASSOCIATION

Arthur Townsend. Sig. Served in Elfreda (Bams). Associate member. December 1. Aged 80.

Charles Hatton. PO Sto. Served in Mariner. December 15. Aged 88.

Dennis Brown. Ldg Sto. Served in Acute. January 4. Aged 82.

Reg Charman. Sto. Served in Jason (Halcyon). Associate member. January 6.

John Swanton. AB. Served in Skipjack. December 22. Aged 83.

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The post will be based in Orkney.

The closing date for applications is Monday 16th Feb 2009 with initial interviews planned for 10th/11th March. A further interview around the 25th March may be required.

For further information please contact:

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Applications are invited for the next Directorate of Joint Commitments (DJC) sponsored long languages courses in Arabic, Pashto and Farsi/Dari at the Defence School of Languages, Beaconsfield, which are planned to start in July 2009 and January 2010.

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Selection for the courses is by interview and candidates must have completed a Modern Language Aptitude Test (MLAT) to the required standard or hold a formal qualification in a foreign language (minimum level: A Level Grade C).

For further information or to request an application form please contact

WO1 Adrian Stone by telephone on 01980 615363 (civ) or 94344 5363 (mil), or by email to wo-lcg@dolsu.mod.uk or DOLSU-LCG-WO.

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● PO Cadets Tom Fishenden and Kieran Hopkins

Acclaim for Yeovil members

MIDSHIPMAN (SCC) Kevin Diaper RNR, having achieved a BTEC qualification with distinction through the Sea Cadets, has had his certificate presented to him by Cdre Chris Palmer, the Commanding Officer of RNAS Yeovilton.

Kevin, who is now 18, started with Yeovil Sea Cadets when he was ten, has also been the Lord Lieutenant's Cadet, and achieved the rank of Midshipman this year.

Kevin's colleagues PO Cadets Tom Fishenden and Kieran Hopkins, also from TS Mantle VC, have the unique distinction of both being selected as Lord Lieutenant's Cadets, having not only beaten all the Sea Cadet applicants but also the Army Cadets, Air Cadets and CCF from Somerset, Bath and Bristol.

26 in a row for Stonehaven

NOBODY could accuse Stonehaven cadets of being inefficient.

The Scottish unit was presented with their 2008 efficiency burgee at their annual dinner – their 26th such success in a row.

A reward to cadets for all their hard work throughout the year, the mess dinner, held at unit HQ in the High Street, follows the traditions and routines of a formal Royal Navy mess dinner.

Unit staff and members of the committee served up the food, while cadets made sure they turned out in the finest formal wear.

Elected mess president is LC Kerri Johnston and vice president LC Nicola MacDonald.

Southwark band goes public

THE band of Southwark unit TS Cossack was formed just over 12 months ago, and has just taken part in its first public performance.

POC George Whitfield took on the task of organising training, content and comprehensive arrangements as part of his BTEC First Diploma in Music.

The London Bridge Development Company provides funding for many local groups and Southwark received £1,500 for the purchase of instruments.

In return the band accepted an invitation to perform at a Christmas community concert at the Unicorn Theatre in Tooley Street, a few yards from Tower Bridge.

The Unicorn is the UK's flagship theatre for young people.

While a fine venue, the stage allowed little room for marching, so the display was largely static, consisting of the *British Grenadiers*, *Swing March*, *Highland Cathedral* (with solo flute), *Drum Salute*, *Ready Aye Ready* and *Sunset*, with solo cornet.

For a finale, side drum Nathaniel Davenport, base drum Alexander Davenport and cornet George Whitfield returned to the stage for the National Anthem.

● Nathaniel Davenport and Kerry Szmidt of the Southwark unit band performing at the Unicorn Theatre



Malta host aviators for Taranto dinner

THE Wardroom of TS St Paul celebrated the Fleet Air Arm raid on Taranto in true naval tradition with a mess dinner.

Joining staff and cadets of the Malta GC unit were a contingent from 815 Naval Air Squadron.

The dinner was held in the Shakespeare dining hall of the Victoria Hotel in Sliema, where the officers, senior rates and NCOs ate a delicious meal served by the sea cadets and marine cadets themselves – the youngsters undergo mess stewarding training as part of their curriculum.

815's CO, Cdr Alun Jones, and his wife Carolyn were guests of honour for the evening, which started with prayers recited by Lt Cdr (SCC) Camilleri RNR.

As with the Trafalgar Night dinner weeks before, the dishes were specially named.

For starters, Chef Montebello prepared a tortellini tossed in a trio of mushrooms, balsamic chive cream sauce with lardons of bacon, entitled *Lumley Lyster's Dream of 1938 Comes True*.

Vice Admiral Sir Arthur



● Members of the Malta GC unit and 815 Naval Air Squadron line up at the Victoria Hotel in Sliema for their Taranto Night dinner

Lumley Lyster drew up the plan for Taranto in the 1930s and, as Rear Admiral, Mediterranean aircraft carriers, flew his flag in HMS Illustrious on the night the carrier launched the attack on the Italian fleet.

For the main course, the diners had a choice of either pan-fried herb-crusted steak with pink and green peppercorns sauce

garnished with fried leeks, or oven-baked herb-crusted swordfish fillets, cooked in sautignon blanc, garlic, lemongrass and lime juice, and garnished with kiwi mussels – a concoction given the name *Operation Judgement*, the codename of the raid on Taranto.

The meal concluded with almond cake – *Warburton's Aerial Photo* – which was adorned with an edible reproduction of the reconnaissance photo Wing Cdr Adrian Warburton took prior to the raid.

The wines chosen were Italian in order to honour the Italians that

lost 59 sailors during the raid.

The main speaker of the evening was Lt (SCC) James Davis RNR (ret'd), who recounted the famous raid on Taranto on the night of November 11 1940, paying tribute to the 42 pilots and observers.

Cdr Jones – who celebrated his 42nd birthday on the day of the dinner – thanked mess president Lt (SCC) Donald Montebello RMR, and presented a pilot's flying helmet signed by all the members of 815 to the CO of the Malta GC unit, Lt (SCC) Jonathan Zahra Davis RNR, who was also celebrating his 20th anniversary in the Corps.

The Wardroom presented Cdr Jones with two wine glasses engraved with the TS St Paul badge, and a copy of the painting by Lt Bayley of a Swordfish during the raid was presented to 815 NAS.

All seven members of the squadron were also presented with a wooden plaque of 815's badge with a personalised inscription.

The evening ended with adult staff and guests playing mess games, mainly with an aerial theme.

The most popular, dubbed Taranto, saw blindfolded players wearing a mock-up model of a Swordfish aircraft bursting various balloons with a 'torpedo' gripped between their knees.

TS Bee celebrates 'sustained effort'

"SUSTAINED effort and special achievement" by Whitehaven cadets has been celebrated at the TS Bee annual presentation evening.

Looking back over 2008, the unit's vice chairman, David Abbott, said it had been a busy and unforgettable year, ranging from the Whitehaven Carnival to the Remembrance Sunday parades and the visit by the Queen.

"Apart from being applauded, hugged, photographed and interviewed, we have also been rewarded," said David.

"During the Carnival we were presented with the trophy for best youth group, and of course there was the magnificent gift of a Laser Pico sailing dinghy from the Whitehaven Festival Company."

The vice chairman also expressed his gratitude to the staff and those who help behind the scenes – including parents, aunts, uncles, husbands, wives, girlfriends.

"It is you who allow us to do what we enjoy and love, and we thank you most sincerely for your support and patient understanding," he concluded.

Unit CO Lt (SCC) Peter Lucas RNR said of the event: "Although we try to reward achievements such as sporting success and rank advancement at various times during the year, this is when we come together to recognise, reward and celebrate sustained effort and special achievement."

Lt Lucas said he was only sad he could not give a certificate to every cadet.

Cheshunt battle on in bid for new HQ

CHESHUNT unit cadets have not had it easy in the past few months – but that hasn't stopped them from carrying on with business as usual.

The largest cloud on the TS Intrepid horizon is the ongoing search for a new headquarters as they will have to leave their current home at Cheshunt School.

Leading the campaign to find and pay for a new home patch is veteran Cheshunt RNA member Ernie Havis, who is a firm believer in the power of the Sea Cadets and other such organisations to teach youngsters values and keep them off the streets.

The latter part of 2008 saw the usual slew of events.

Torrential rain, a leaking roof and a broken boiler did not make for a promising Trafalgar Night dinner, but the unit managed to rise above the problems.

A debt of gratitude was owed to a member of the Edmonton unit and her mother, who prepared and cooked a roast beef dinner, and to those parents who provided heated trolleys to keep the food hot.

Cheshunt staff and cadets got stuck in by serving the food, clearing tables and washing up.

Two members of the unit took part in the Lord Mayor's Show, while a large contingent turned out for Remembrance ceremonies.

There was also the small matter of an annual inspection, at which Cdr Paul Haines praised cadets for their hard work and improvement over the past year.

Cdr Haines presented Cds Michela Sinclair and Jordan Morgan with Jack Petchey awards for outstanding achievement, and Jordan was also chosen as cadet of the Year for his efforts.

In the run-up to Christmas TS Intrepid opened a new charity shop in College Road, manned by volunteers and selling donated items such as clothes and books to raise funds for the unit.

Ma Santa at Fitzroy

MA Santa paid a call to the Falkland Islands Sea and Marine Cadets whilst they were on a weekend camp near Fitzroy Settlement.

The camp, a joint training weekend, involved juniors, seniors and Marines.

The cadets greeted Ma Santa (and her "green and mean" elf) with a rendition of Silent Night so loud that it would have disturbed the reindeer in Lapland.

Being the Falklands, of course, Ma Santa left her sled behind and travelled into Camp (the local name for everywhere that is not Stanley) by Land Rover.



● TS Jersey's colours are marched past the congregation and parishioners of St Peter

Jersey prove their pedigree

THERE was quite possibly an extra spring in the step and a sharper snap in the drill of the cadets of the Jersey unit towards the end of last year.

For the lads and lasses of TS Jersey were officially recognised as one of the best units in the Southern Area following their biannual parade and inspection.

Every unit is assessed annually for its team spirit, achievements, endeavour and flair by officers from Sea Cadet headquarters.

And having worked very hard to reach such a high standard, in the 2008 inspection the cadets

excelled themselves and as a result picked up a prized burgee.

The flag is the highest area award a unit can achieve, and was handed over to TS Jersey by the Connetable of the parish of St Peter, Tom de Feu, during the unit's annual Trafalgar Day parade and service.

And following the service the whole ship's company of TS Jersey carried out a march-past for the benefit of the congregation and parishioners of St Peter, with the unit's colours flying proudly.



Twickenham Sea Cadets

Volunteer Staff Required



Twickenham Sea Cadets, based in Teddington, are looking for volunteer staff. If you are between 18 and 65 years of age and have any kind of disciplined background, preferably Royal Navy or Merchant Navy, are willing to give up Tuesday evenings and Sunday mornings to supervise and instruct cadets, we would very much like to hear from you. It is open to both males and females, willing to be trained by the Sea Cadet Corps to supervise and instruct cadets or has any knowledge or civilian qualifications in navigation, sailing, seamanship, drill, cook/stewarding, boating or Military band music.

Further information contact Officer in Charge on 020 8977 7575 on a Tuesday evening/Sunday morning or email twickenham341@aol.com

Historic paths start to converge

THE strapline at the top of these pages says it all – Sea Cadets.

Or maybe not, because the official title for the organisation at large is the Marine Society & Sea Cadets.

So where did these two organisations come from?

The Marine Society is the world's oldest general maritime charity, dating back to a meeting in the King's Arms Tavern in London on June 25 1756.

By the end of that evening, John Thornton, Jonas Hanway and 22 others had formed the Society as a response to the effects of the Seven Years War on trading conditions.

The Society offered sponsorship for naval recruits, open "to all stout lads and boys, who incline to go on board his Majesty's ships, with a view to learn the duty of a seaman."

If approved by the Society, they were clothed, provided with bedding and their journey to a port paid by the charity.

Ten volunteers were the first fruits of a scheme which exceeded wildest expectations; by 1763 the Society had found more than 10,000 men and boys – five per cent of the total intake by the Navy during the war.

And in response to suggestions from COs at sea, pre-service training was provided, making the Marine Society the first to pioneer nautical training for boys in its special school ships.

That training continued until World War 2, by which time an estimated 110,000 or more men and boys had been recruited through the Society for the Royal Navy and the Merchant Marine.

The Marine Society had always supported groups with similar aims, one of which was the Sea Cadet Corps, which traces its ancestry back to the Crimean War (1854-56), when Naval Lads' Brigades were formed to help orphans in ports, the first being in Whitstable.

In 1910 pressure group the Navy League sponsored units of the Navy League Boys' Naval Brigade, which in 1919 were recognised by the Admiralty; the initial 34 units formed the nascent Navy League Sea Cadet Corps.

At the start of World War 2 there were almost 100 units and more than 10,000 cadets, boosted by Lord Nuffield's £50,000 donation in 1937.

The skills and knowledge of cadets made them valuable additions to the Fleet, and as a result of imaginative and productive training schemes the organisation was revamped in 1942, with the King as Admiral of the new Sea Cadet Corps.

A massive expansion to 400 units and 50,000 cadets coincided in many towns and cities with Warship Weeks, giving newly-formed units the chance to take the same name as an adopted warship, some of which endure to this day.

Costs were split between the Admiralty, which paid for uniforms, equipment, travel and training, and the Navy League, which paid for sport and unit HQs.

1942 also saw the formation of the Girls' Naval Training Corps, which affiliated to the main Corps in 1963 and folded in 1980 when girls were admitted into Sea Cadet Corps units.

The Sea Cadet Council was set up to govern the Corps in 1948, and a retired captain became the supervisor, now known as Captain, Sea Cadet Corps.

In 1955 a Marine Cadet Section was formed, and within ten years the five detachments had expanded to 40.

And in 1976 the Navy League was renamed the Sea Cadet Association, as its sole *raison d'être* was the support of the cadets.

Next month: Working together

Thurrock cover salient points

A SO-SO drill display by a European country's land forces prompted the senior officer of the Thurrock unit to take a contingent to the Menin Gate ceremony in Ypres.

In 2007 Thurrock Executive Officer Lt (SCC) George Wilson RNR commented on the standard of drill to a ferry captain from his company, and the captain said George's cadets should show everyone what they can do.

Other units with links to Thurrock through their training ship TS Iveston were invited to participate, and cadets from Orpington, Hornchurch, Harlow, Clacton and Walton took up the offer.

A group of three pipers and a drummer from Epping Forest Pipe Band and Essex Caledonian Association accompanied the cadets.

The tour party reached Ypres late in the afternoon, giving cadets the chance to explore the town and to look over the Menin Gate itself.

Lt Wilson explained the history of the memorial and the significance of the names upon it, and the cadets watched the Last Post ceremony to familiarise themselves for the following evening.

The next morning, resplendent in No 4s, the cadets visited a number of memorials and cemeteries, including Tyne Cot – and the recent snow had caused the red colouring of poppy wreaths to run, a poignant sight for the youngsters.

Lt Wilson explained the RN Division's history, and most cadets found an RN Division headstone at which to place their tributes.

Hooze Crater and Passchendaele were also on the itinerary before the party returned to Ypres in heavy snow to prepare for the ceremony, which has taken place every evening since 1928, except during World War 2.

Plans were amended at the last minute as a promised (then cancelled) police escort became available, allowing the platoon to march the short distance from the



● PO Cadet Michael Downing, of Clacton unit, at a Royal Naval Division grave in Tyne Cot cemetery (above); the Sea Cadet platoon marches to the Menin Gate (right)

town square to the gate, headed by the pipers, followed by LC Kieran Risk with the unit standard.

LC Lewis Smith had the privilege of reading the Exhortation after the Last Post had been sounded by the Belgian Fire Brigade buglers.

After the two minutes silence, LC Ashley Atkinson laid a wreath on behalf of the unit, then a lament was played by one of the pipers.

After the Reveille, CPO (SCC) Sue Stupples, Thurrock's CO, brought the platoon from three files across the gate to three columns in line with the Gate with a little-used "Incline, from the halt to the halt" drill movement, which the cadets executed perfectly.

The platoon marched back down



Meensestraat to the applause of the spectators lining the pavements.

After free time (to buy souvenirs and chocolate) on the Monday morning – and the chance to field some more congratulations from the townsfolk for their splendid

display – the group headed off for the ferry home.

The visit was such a success that another is being planned, probably in mid-2010 to allow for fundraising and to take advantage of warmer weather.

Cromwell has bright future

A SMALL group of cadets and their CO have managed to turn around the fortunes of an ailing unit.

Huntingdon and District – TS Cromwell – could muster just eight individuals a year ago, but now boasts more than 20, with more waiting to join.

Among the leading lights of CO CPO Nick Gilks' team were AC Becky Rayner, LC Cassandra Creak, OCs Crittcher and Biederman, Cdt Ratcliff, 1st Class Jnrs Creak and Coldrick and Jnrs Page and Johnson.

Between them the cadets amassed a hoard of trophies and awards, including most considerate junior cadet (1st Class Jnr Creak), five-a-side football, best shot, smartest cadet, cadet of the year, most improved cadet and more.

All cadets have had the chance to go boating, rowing and camping, and the senior cadets spent their summer camp on board HMS Bristol, while others took passage in TS John Jerwood.

More recently the unit manned a stall for the switching-on of the Christmas lights, and cadets raised money by packing bags.

Gifts sent to needy families

WHITLEY Bay unit worked hard to bring a little Christmas cheer to the poor of Romania, Moldova and Albania.

The cadets of TS Whitley filled shoeboxes with gifts for the families who live in appalling conditions, with no running water, heating or electricity.

Into the 21 boxes went simple 'luxuries' such as hats and gloves, toys and toiletries.

The packing process was thoroughly enjoyed by the youngsters.

One of the organisers, PO Thompson, said: "We would like to thank parents and members of the public for their kind donations."

The boxes were sent out to remote villages and hospitals, charity kindergartens and shanty towns.

Red-letter (and blue burgee) day at Merton

THE ROYAL Navy past, present and future was represented at a ceremony to mark the opening of Merton unit's new headquarters in Mitcham.

Captain of the Corps Capt Jonathan Fry RN and the Mayor of Merton, Cllr Martin Whelton, were among the VIPs who attended the unveiling of a foundation plaque on the main deck of TS Trafalgar.

Also there were local MP Siobhain McDonagh and four former mayors.

It represented a red-letter day in the life of the unit, meriting a special entry in the ship's log, and it heralds a new, exciting chapter in the annals of the group.

Representing the current Navy – besides Capt Fry – were six of the Port crew of HMS Vanguard, including Lt Cdr Chris Rowe, a former Trafalgar cadet.

The Royal Navy of yore was there in the form of Charles Baker, chairman of the South London branch of the Coastal Forces Veterans Association, and a number of his colleagues.

And the Navy of the future, of course, was represented by the cadets themselves – who have done their unit proud over the past year or so.

So much so that a memorable day was made even better when Capt Fry presented the ship's company with a burgee for their first-class performance in 2007-08.



● Capt Jonathan Fry, Captain Sea Cadets (left) and CPO (SCC) Mark Walker, Officer-in-Charge of Merton unit (right) with the 2008 burgee, held by PO Cadet Holbrook

That the whole programme on the day ran like clockwork was a tribute to the hard work of Officer-in-Charge CPO (SCC) Mark Walker, his ship's company, and the chairmen and teams from the unit management committee (Carol Steel) and P&FA (Anne Edwards) respectively.

Thanks were also due to the staff and cadets from Croydon unit TS Terra Nova for their support.

TS Trafalgar was founded in 1911 and is believed to be the third oldest in the Corps.

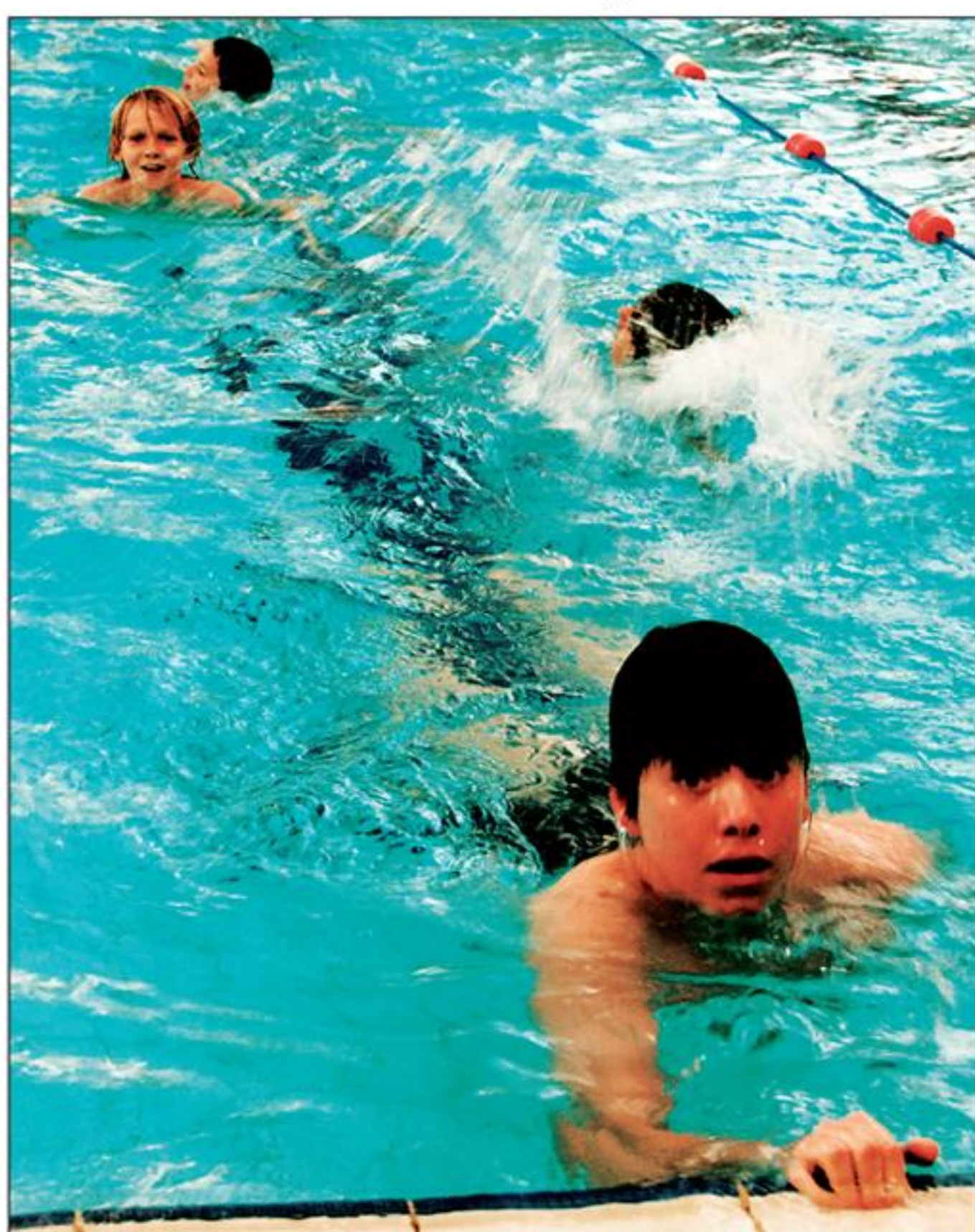
But it became clear five years

ago that the old headquarters, in Wimbledon, were not fit for purpose, nor could it be made so.

As the unit owned the freehold of the property, it was sold with a view to the future.

The ceremony at the new headquarters actually marked the culmination of stage one of the redevelopment.

Stage two will be the taking possession of two of the 14 flats now being erected on the Wimbledon site, which will then be let, providing a valuable source of income to TS Trafalgar.



● CADETS from Christ's Hospital, the charitable boarding school, made a virtual trip from their home at Horsham along the Western Front for Help for Heroes. Pupils of the school – one of the founding members of the CCF movement – covered a distance equal to that of Christ's Hospital to Ypres, then the full length of the Western Front down to the Swiss border. The Channel crossing of 22 miles meant 1,416 lengths of the school pool, completed in just 45 minutes by a team of swimmers (pictured), who then joined others in 663 mile-long laps of the school in the drizzle, including marching, running, three-legged walking and crawling through mud.

St Albans on target for trophy and funds

MARINE and Sea Cadets from St Albans unit proved themselves the best naval shots in Hertfordshire at the district .22 shooting competition.

TS St Albans was up against a dozen other teams from across Hertfordshire but none of the others could match the home teams.

The St Albans A team (Cpl Wales, Mne Cds Buck and Landsdown) took first prize, while the unit's B team (LC Smart, Cds Newman and Jueno-Chapman) took runners-up spot.

The best shot from the competition was 15-year-old Cdt Demi Jueno-Chapman.

The unit then switched from serious competition to serious fund-raising, swapping their caps for antlers at the same time.

Ten cadets from TS St Albans, plus instructors and parents, helped Sainsbury's shoppers pack their bags just before Christmas.

The event raised £825 for unit coffers, but just as important was the chance to raise the profile of the unit, and a number of younger shoppers expressed an interest in joining them.

The bag-pack rounded off a busy and successful year for the unit, which won awards and trophies in 2008 for shooting, sailing, kayaking and expeditions.

Whitehaven goes pink

WHITEHAVEN cadets raised money for a cancer charity by ditching dark blue in favour of pink.

"It was great fun and all our cadets joined in," said unit CO Lt (SCC) Peter Lucas RNR.

"One of the cadets turned up in a Pink Panther costume, another was wearing a pink tutu and everyone – including the staff – was wearing something pink."

The usual subs paid by cadets were topped up by additional donations from cadets and staff, and in total around £50 was raised for the Breast Cancer Campaign.



● Happy faces of cadets on board TS John Jerwood – happy that the offshore training vessel had found shelter from Force 8 conditions during her South Coast training cruise at the end of last year

Rough training and smooth progress

TAKING the rough with the smooth was the key to the final weeks of 2008 for cadets from the Northampton and Wellingborough unit.

Seven representatives of TS Laforey (Northampton) and satellite TS Diamond (Wellingborough) took a South Coast training cruise in TS John Jerwood.

Conditions were officially 'challenging' (ie lumpy), but as they made their way from Weymouth to Cowes and Southampton in

Force 8 conditions the cadets learned about offshore navigation, engineering and the art of cooking at sea.

Smooth progress through the year by the cadets meant 2008 ended with them winning the Stephenson Trophy for best unit in the Eastern region – an unprecedented fifth year in succession they have achieved the honour.

CO Lt Chris Read said: "The competition is extremely tough as the top units in the area are of an extremely high standard."

"At the end of the day the cadets, guided by the excellent instructional staff we have at Northampton and Wellingborough, give their all to achieve this impressive result."

"We are humbled and amazed that we are still in the top position."

That was not the only trophy to adorn the unit's cabinet, as they also scooped the Angus Pearson Memorial Shield for the best junior Sea Cadet section, the Carol Ann Rose Bowl for excellence in offshore training, and the Peter Bayliss Trophy for training participation.

The benefit of such training



● The winning girls senior five-a-side football team from the Northampton and Wellingborough unit

was demonstrated by the passing-out from HMS Raleigh of former Northampton cadet Chris Ihme, who spent six years with the unit.

The Laforey and Diamond footballers have been making their mark in end-of-year competitions.

The regional five-a-side finals were held as part of a fun weekend, including ice-skating and swimming.

But the junior boys, senior boys and senior girls teams refused to

be distracted by the peripheral activities; the boys fell in the semi-final of their competition but the girls were made of sterner stuff.

An action-packed final saw the Leeds team defeated, which put the girls through to the national finals, to be held this month in Birmingham.

Wellingborough has held its annual open evening and prizegiving at its new HQ at Rushden.

New link yields welcome figures

BURGEONING links between the Harrow and Wembley unit and the Worshipful Company of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (WCCA EW) has seen the cadets' coffers boosted by £2,000.

Three members of the WCCA EW visited TS Dundas just before Christmas to present a cheque for the purchase of training equipment and to subsidise courses for staff and cadets.

The representatives, Master of the Company Rachel Adams, Chief Clerk Clifford Bygrave and James Macnamara, were welcomed on board and watched as the unit went through Colours.

Following the presentation of the cheque to unit president Capt Hugh Peltor, the Master of the Company was given a tour of the unit and spoke to cadets.

Mrs Adams said she looked forward to meeting the cadets again, and hoped to go boating with them in the summer.

Earlier in the year, following an expression of interest in affiliation between the two groups, the unit was visited by members of the WCCA EW, for whom cadets put on displays of ropework and rigging and camping skills to demonstrate some of the skills and activities they learn and take part in.

Carrier CO visits for anniversary

THE Naval section of the CCF at St John's School in Leatherhead welcomed the CO of one of the Navy's most powerful warships to their 50th anniversary celebrations.

The section is affiliated to aircraft carrier HMS Ark Royal, and Capt John Clink – himself a former CCF cadet – was invited to take part in the occasion just before the Christmas holidays.

Capt Clink took the salute at the official ceremonies, inspecting the cadets and presenting ten CCF proficiency awards.

Among the St John's 'old boys' present was Patrick Gardner, one of the school's first cadets.

After demonstrations by the cadets and speeches from the principal guests, Capt Clink cut the anniversary cake.

The officer said: "My own experience in the CCF was the springboard for my naval career, and I attach great importance to progressing our affiliation, through not only getting cadets on board HMS Ark Royal but also by my team taking the time to visit the school."



● Lt Cdr Peter Cunningham bids farewell on board HMS Victory after 45 years service
Picture: LA(Phot) Owen King

45 and out for Peter

A RETIRED officer with 45 years service to the Naval community has finally hung up his sword.

Lt Cdr Peter Cunningham joined the RN from school as a seaman officer cadet in 1963.

He served in ships ranging from minesweepers (HMS Fiskerton in Borneo during the 'Confrontation') to carriers, including the old HMS Ark Royal and HMS Invincible.

Amongst other ships were Victorious, Undaunted, Tenby, Scarborough, Tiger and Tartar.

His shore time was equally varied, including periods as a staff officer at the NBCD School, as a French interpreter on NATO staff and as a staff officer in charge of all URNs.

Peter retired from active service 15 years ago but remained in uniform as a Retired Officer-grade civil

servant, supervising the 126 RN sections of CCFs.

A keen sportsman in a wide range of activities, Peter has completed several marathons and half marathons, competed in the Fastnet Race and won a couple of RN caps in rugby.

At the age of 64 he still plays cricket and referees local rugby matches.

A resident of Alverstoke, in Gosport, Peter has actively sought out opportunities for disadvantaged young people to participate in adventurous activities, including sailing.

All 126 CCF RN contingents and Peter's many friends and colleagues contributed to a farewell gift of an inscribed barograph and pen, presented to him on their behalf by Capt Colin Welborn, Chief of Staff (Youth) to CINCFleet, on board HMS Victory.



● LC Bonnie Driver, Lord Lieutenant's Sea cadet for Oxfordshire and a member of the Oxford unit, at the Donnington Bridge HQ Christmas tree sale. TS Euryalus has been selling Christmas trees for more than 30 years to help pay unit running costs. With a target of around 1,300 trees to shift, as well as decorations and other stalls, all cadets, staff and helpers work hard at moving trees and netting them for customers. Normal training is suspended during the 'Operation Christmas Tree', as it has become known



● Peruvians destroy their own ship, the *Union*, to prevent it falling into Chilean hands – one of the many watercolours by Rudolph de Lisle



(The colour of) war and peace

THESE days a sizeable proportion of the Chilean Navy can trace its roots to British shipyards.

But the RN's ties with the South American nation go back more than two centuries (they name a ship for Cochrane to this day).

And while the Senior Service enjoyed the height of *Pax Victoriana*, Chile, Peru and Bolivia locked horns over the ownership of rich mineral resources which straddled the countries' borders.

The result was war – and war on land spilled over into war at sea (largely between Chile and Peru).

For two years, Lt Rudolph de Lisle watched the two South American navies fight from the privileged vantage point of HMS Shannon.

De Lisle kept a fairly comprehensive diary which, on its own, presents a fascinating insight into a (pretty brutal) war and the RN of the day.

What lifts it into another league, however, is the wealth of fine paintings, splendidly reproduced in colour alongside the journal in *The Royal Navy and the Peruvian-Chilean War 1879-1881* (Pen & Sword, £30 ISBN 978-1844-156528).

De Lisle painted pretty much everything he witnessed in South America: the ships, the mountains, the wildlife, the ports, the railways, the soldiers, the battles, the dead.

He played cricket (de Lisle wasn't a bad batsman),

attended society balls and observed battle – and its aftermath (he painted the battle of Chorillos in January 1881 with particular flair).

That battle saw the Peruvians routed, followed by rape and pillage by the Chileans who razed the town, killed every Peruvian, young or old, man or woman, they found, then began fighting among themselves until they'd killed 200 men in their own ranks.

"The scenes inside Chorillos are beyond description, the men rushing about maddened with fighting and liquor, burning and destroying the whole place," de Lisle wrote.

The Peruvians were no less ruthless. As their army crumbled, the people revolted... and sacked their own capital, Lima, in particular its Chinese quarter. "Anyone who ventured out into the streets was received with a shower of bullets."

The battles fought by HMS *Surprise* were, mercifully, rather less bloody. Her career is equally sumptuously illustrated, however, courtesy of the brush of Geoff Hunt, arguably the world's pre-eminent maritime artist.

He has joined forces with the respected (and increasingly prolific) Brian Lavery to recount the ship's factual – and fictional – story in *Frigate*

Surprise (Conway, £30 ISBN 978-18448-60746).

The fictional *Surprise* is the star (alongside Jack Aubrey) of Patrick O'Brian's novels. The real *Surprise* spent six years in the service of the Crown between 1796 and 1802, after being seized from the French.

And it is the real frigate to which most of this excellent collaboration is devoted.

But it's the insights into the way a leading maritime artist works which are particularly fascinating. Hunt's devotion to his subject is admirable: he uses the ship's plans to build scale models, gathers all the literature of the navies of the day he can, matches contemporary liveries and makes copious notes and sketches (some reproduced here) before tackling the final painting.

After all this blood and guts, how nice to pick up a more relaxing volume, again adorned with copious illustrations.

James Taylor's *Voyage of the Beagle* is another impressive volume from the Conway stable (£20 ISBN 978-18448-60661).

Beagle's voyage would eventually give rise to Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (published 150 years ago this very year).

Darwin aside, Beagle also carried an official artist

– "painting men" as FitzRoy called them. It is their work which is the superb 'backbone' of this work.

Charles Darwin is a name every biology student in the world knows. Beyond naval circles, the man who led Beagle on her groundbreaking voyage, Robert FitzRoy, has rather been eclipsed – and not merely because of his passenger's scientific genius.

Darwin was also a prolific writer – books, letters, diaries. FitzRoy was not – and so much of our knowledge of Beagle's voyage comes from the civilian, rather than the sailor.

FitzRoy was also not an easy man to get on with. The two frequently quarreled (although the naval officer quickly calmed down), but above all, FitzRoy quarreled with the Admiralty, railing at them for asking him to do the impossible – without, of course, paying for it.

"This Survey has indeed done me more harm in every way than it is easy to believe," he fumed in Chile in 1834. "I have lost by it health, time, money and friends."

"This Survey" would, in time, give birth to that book – a book which FitzRoy detested.

Today he is remembered as the father of the Met Office (he finally had a shipping forecast area named after him in 2002).

It was one science Robert FitzRoy embraced. Yet he never accepted the findings Darwin drew from their legendary voyage, always choosing "to believe God rather than Man".

Peace and a piece of paper

THE public has a habit of forgetting very quickly.

How often do we label the Great War 'senseless', the fighting in the trenches 'pointless', 'butchery' and so on?

Yet it was not seen that way in November 1918. Victory was celebrated. Peoples across Europe celebrated their independence.

Munich has become a byword for failed international diplomacy. It fed rather than satiated Hitler's avarice for land.

Today we lampoon Chamberlain and his 'piece of paper'. In September 1938, however, he was hailed by the British public for seemingly averting war.

The RN in the summer and early autumn of 1938 was if not unprepared for war, then reluctant to become embroiled in another European conflagration.

In the late 30s, the Senior Service was going through a massive expansion and modernisation programme.

Politicians hail the current investment in the Type 45s and future carriers, but it rather pales with the year 1937 when a major warship was being laid down or launched every week.

The only problem was that most of these ships were far from ready for war in September 1938.

HMS *Ark Royal* was still a good few months off commissioning. The King George Vs were still being built, new carrier *Illustrious* wouldn't be ready until the spring of 1940.

And so First Sea Lord Roger Backhouse advised the government strongly against war as Hitler tubthumped for the annexation of the Sudetenland, a region of Czechoslovakia largely inhabited by ethnic Germans.

Chamberlain listened to Backhouse – and his Army and RAF counterparts.

But he also listened to an untrained – and often misguided – American observer, perhaps crucially, as Matthew Wills shows in *The Lindbergh Report* (Authorhouse, £10.99 ISBN 978-1434349880).

Charles Lindbergh is best remembered as the first man to fly solo across the Atlantic. The flight brought him fame and influence –

far beyond the realm of the clouds.

Yet Lindbergh was charmed (or, more accurately, hoodwinked) by the Nazis, and especially Hermann Göring, who invited him to tour German aircraft factories and airfields.

With Europe teetering on the brink of war, the American Ambassador in London, Joseph Kennedy (father of JFK) asked the aviator to compile a report on the state of the continent's air forces.

History has come to know it as 'the Lindbergh report', a chilling document compiled just hours before Chamberlain met Hitler in September 1938.

Lindbergh warned that "Germany now has the means of destroying London, Paris and Prague. For the first time in history, a nation has the power either to save or to ruin the great cities of Europe."

Historians – and the public – have known about the report for the past 70 years.

But what we have not known is

what happened to it after Lindbergh wrote it.

Wills, who is currently working on a biography of the impressive Capt John Leach, CO of the ill-fated Prince of Wales, was granted access to key private papers.

Kennedy's were severely pruned. Lindbergh's were not. They show, as conclusively as they can, that Chamberlain met Hitler in September 1938 either having read a copy of the report, or at the very least a précis of it.

It is impossible to say, of course, whether it fundamentally affected Chamberlain's thinking, but he was terrified by the prospect of Londoners "lying as prey to bombardment".

Lindbergh grossly over-estimated German strength. The Luftwaffe never did have the power to raze London, Paris or Prague, while within six months, Chamberlain's piece of paper was entirely that.

And so today we view Munich as an out-and-out failure. It delayed war rather than forestall it.

But for the Senior Service, that was a blessing. It was in a far stronger position in the autumn of 1939 than it was 1938.

The Bell époque

AS WE begin the centenary year of naval aviation, how timely it is that the memoirs of one of its pioneers have been reprinted after four decades.

Richard Bell Davies was one of the first of the few – he joined the naval air wing before it earned the title Royal Naval Air Service.

He was only the second naval aviator to earn the Victoria Cross – a deed he plays down in his memoirs, *Sailor in the Air* (Seaforth, £9.99 ISBN 978-1-84832-0116).

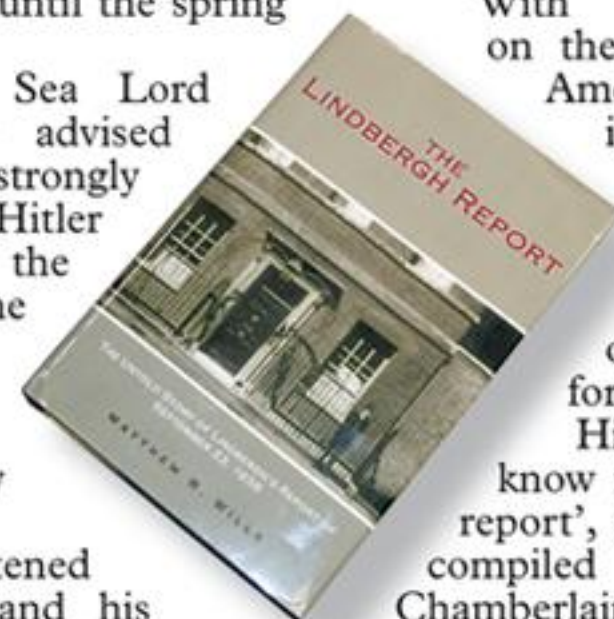
Indeed, Bell Davies has a habit of describing most of his accomplishments – and there are many – with remarkable sangfroid.

Ferocious German flak defending U-boats alongside the Mole at Zeebrugge, for example, was dismissed as "hullabaloo" (which managed to shoot the aviator in the thigh...).

Bell Davies was not the first man to land on a carrier at sea (that distinction fell to Edwin Dunning, an exploit oddly chosen as the jacket cover), but he was instrumental in perfecting the basics of carrier operations as we know them today: launching and, especially, landing aircraft.

Indeed, the island, hooks and arrestor wires are all thanks to a series of experiments Bell Davies and his fellow pioneers conducted in the autumn of 1918. As befits the pioneering days of aviation, it was all rather improvised: sailors would rush out on to the deck of HMS *Argus* and slap down paint at the spot where the wheels of Bell Davies' Sopwith 1½ Strutter touched down.

Although he was an airman, Bell Davies was a sailor first; unlike many contemporaries, he refused to transfer to the RAF.



They were expendable

IN APRIL and June 1945 the Japanese launched the 'Ten-Go' operation against Allied maritime forces assaulting Okinawa.

The key component of this campaign were 1,900 kamikaze or 'Divine Wind' 'Special Attack' aircraft of various types, on what were intended to be one-way missions to expend themselves as manned missiles against the Allied warships.

Considerable damage was inflicted, not least upon the radar pickets deployed to give early warning of enemy air strikes and to be the controllers of the first line of fighter defence.

Robin Reilly has produced an interesting and, within its own limits comprehensive, examination of these picket forces and their trials at the formidable enemies they faced in **Kamikazes, Corsairs and Picket Ships: Okinawa 1945** (Casemate, £25 ISBN 978-1-932033-86-1).

Radar picket ships by definition are the first to meet the enemy and are inevitably the most exposed to enemy attack; so it was at Okinawa.

The author shows how radar picket duty was not just a task for destroyers but how other types, notably Landing Craft Support (Large) and Landing Ships Medium (Rockets) were deployed to help protect the faster warships. The latter had insufficient gun armament to be successful but the LCS(L)s with their director controlled 40-mm guns proved to be of considerable assistance. Reilly has previously written about these ships, which is what attracted him to this wider study.

He is also a specialist on Japan and writes quite sympathetically about the kamikaze impulse. He points out that the word may be a mistranslation of the word *shimpu* or *shimbu*, used by the Imperial Japanese Navy to designate its 'Special Attack Corps'; it can equally mean 'gathering of courageous forces'.

He argues that *shimbu* pilots were indeed courageous. Given the circumstances, their attacks "rather than being fanatical missions launched by madmen were actually the only possibility for the Japanese to prevent the invasion of their homeland. They were the only rational means by

The Grove Review

which it could be demonstrated that an invasion of Japan would be too costly."

Many may be surprised to learn that the suicide offensive was a joint effort, the Japanese Army Air Force playing almost as big a part as the Naval Air Arm, with 850 sorties out of the 1900. Two hundred of the 250 Kamikazes launched from Taiwan were Army missions.

This is of particular interest from the Royal Navy perspective as the aircraft staged through the islands of the Sakishima Gunto chain that were the subject of the attentions of the British Pacific Fleet.

The latter gets scant mention beyond this basic fact, which will annoy many British readers but, to be fair to the author, the book is focused primarily on the pickets and the main units of the US fleet are also only mentioned in passing.

The air assets controlled by the pickets were not only carrier based aircraft but US Marine Corsair day fighters and Hellcat night fighters based ashore in Okinawa on the airfields captured at the outset of the invasion. These were later supplemented by US Army Thunderbolts and Black Widows. On the Allied side too Okinawa was much more of a joint operation than one might think.

The radar pickets and the aircraft they controlled were an indication of how 'network enabled' maritime warfare had become by the closing months of the war with various platforms being electronically integrated into a single force. In such a context core capabilities might not look very aggressive. For much of the campaign Capt Frederick Moosbrugger (readers may remember the later US destroyer which carried his distinctive name) controlled the anti-air screen from an amphibious assault ship, USS Biscayne, usually at anchor.

On the picket line itself life could be very hard indeed.

It was remarkable how tough the latest US destroyers proved. A single attacker crashing close inboard might inflict fatal underwater damage. On the other hand, the USS Laffey famously absorbed seven suicide aircraft and



● USS Bunker Hill burns on the morning of May 11 1945 after suffering two kamikaze hits in 30 seconds during the invasion of Okinawa. The carrier suffered more than 650 casualties but managed to limp back to Pearl Harbor

Picture: US National Archives

three bombs and still survived. It would have been even worse without the protection of LCS(L) 51 that shot down six aircraft – one of which left an engine embedded in the side of the little ship which well earned its Presidential Unit Citation.

The author provides a great deal of detail of all these events on the picket line. His research has been impressive and he is faithful to his copious sources.

This can make the account appear a little dry at times. He also makes no attempt to comment on or reconcile the details his sources report. One rapidly becomes an

expert on the different types of Japanese aircraft, helped by a contemporary identification table at the back of the book, but one really wonders if all the types reported are that accurate.

The author's Japanese sources seem to indicate that most of the single-engine Army aircraft used for special attack were 'Oscars' or 'Sonias' and one wonders how many 'Nates' and 'Tonys' (both fighters) claimed by the US fighters were really similar looking 'Vals' and 'Judys' (both dive bombers) and equally how many Navy 'Zekes' and 'Vals' were Army 'Oscars' and 'Sonias'.

One can hardly expect accurate identification in the pressure of action.

One thing that does come over, however, is how vulnerable Japanese aircraft of any type or service were both to Allied fighters and radar-assisted anti-aircraft fire; no wonder their tactics had become so desperate and that 'special courage' was now necessary.

The Japanese Navy used a wide range of types for suicide missions including biplanes, both combatant seaplanes and 'Willow' trainers.

The wooden frame of the 'Willow' meant it was gave less of a radar return thus being much less vulnerable to proximity fused AA fire than more modern higher performance machines, an

interesting early manifestation of stealth.

No less than 42 of the 101 destroyers assigned to picket duty were sunk or damaged, 13 of the 88 LCS(L)s and five of the 11 LSM(R)s, but the losses were considered acceptable given their vital role in defending the beachhead and the supporting fleet.

The pickets' role in absorbing Kamikazes, shooting many down with their guns, was as important as the damage inflicted by the aircraft they controlled. Their vital and demanding role has now been fully explained.

I challenge anyone not to glean something new from this important and detailed new account of the closing days of the Pacific War.

The enormous burden of survivor's guilt

ANYONE who was privileged enough to know the late Ted Briggs knew what an immense burden he bore with fortitude and dignity.

In later years, the media in particular (and *Navy News* is guilty of this too) could not refer to the veteran sailor without adding "last survivor of the Hood" – a description seemingly as natural as saying "John Smith, a 38-year-old greengrocer from Manchester..."

And heavy though his burden was, Ted Briggs was one of three men to survive the loss of mighty Hood.

Fate was even harsher to Norman 'Geordie' Walton. Not last survivor, but sole survivor; of 765 men aboard cruiser HMS Neptune, he was the only man to survive after a succession of mines crippled and sank her.

His story is told by his daughter Norma Hudson in **Sole Survivor: One Man's Journey** (The Memoir Club, £19.95 ISBN 978-1-84104-184-1).

And like Ted Briggs – to those who did not know him at any rate – Norman Walton was defined by what happened to him a few days before Christmas 1941 as Force K

– a task group of cruisers and destroyers led by HMS Neptune – tried to strangle Rommel's supply lines in the Mediterranean.

The force strayed into a minefield, with fatal consequences. Neptune was the first – and gravest victim.

One by one, the men on Norman Walton's Carley, Rory O'Connor, passed away over five terrible days off Tripoli.

It is more than a quarter of a century since men of the Royal Navy had to take to life rafts for real – and they were picked up in a matter of minutes.

It's worth remembering what happens to the human body after five days without food or water in a Mediterranean gale.

"My leg joints and arm joints are not working. I can hardly see. I'm thirsty – I can't swallow as my tongue is swelling up," 'Geordie' Walton wrote in his diary.

"As I watched my shipmates die around me, the guilt and depression was overpowering, not being able to help them and letting them go."

Temporarily blind, Walton and a shipmate – who subsequently died – were picked up by an Italian torpedo boat on Christmas Eve 1941.

As his eyesight returned, nurses in an Italian hospital in Tripoli handed Norman Walton a mirror. He didn't recognise the reflection.

"My tongue was swollen to twice its size, my lips were swollen and my nose was spread across my face, which was black with oil," he recalled.

Given the blow upon blow the Allies suffered as 1941 drew to a close – Pearl Harbor, the loss of Prince of Wales and Repulse, fighting at the gates of Moscow and Leningrad, Ark Royal sunk, Barham sunk, the battleships of the Mediterranean Fleet knocked out – the loss of Neptune (and HMS Kandahar, another victim of the sweep off Tripoli) has become that rather clichéd 'forgotten tragedy'.

Imagine today – when every death in Iraq and Afghanistan is national news – such a tragedy being 'encapsulated' in a mere five paragraphs in a local paper.

But it was – and that clipping didn't even scratch the surface of the Neptune story, whether for the 764 poor souls who went down with her, the sole survivor, or the

families left behind.

It's fairly rare in the many nautical books which cross our desk to find the family's story included. On Boxing Day

1941, the Walton family in Swallow, a village on the south-western edge of the Tyneside conurbation, received a terse telegram from Portsmouth Naval Base: *Regret to report that your son John N Walton, Able Seaman PSSX 26921, is missing on war service.*

"I will never forget my mother's horrible scream: 'Oh, me bairn,'" Norman Walton's sister Isabelle recalled.

"Silence, silence, then: 'Norman, where are you?' Mam was shouting and started running around the house. Dad was just a bundle of nerves."

Eventually a postcard would reach the Walton household from Tripoli, couched in stoical terms: "I have survived the most unpleasant experience a man could ever wish for – six days in a small boat with nothing to eat or drink."

Norman Walton would eventually be repatriated.

He served in the Navy (and

in another war, Korea) until the late 50s. He would also fight as a professional boxer in the North-East in the 1940s and 50s under the improbable moniker 'Patsy Dodds'.

He would carve out a new career in industry, and take up a new sport, golf.

It was four decades after Neptune's loss that interest in her began to be rekindled, particularly in New Zealand (150 victims of the sinking were Kiwis; it was the country's worst disaster of the war).

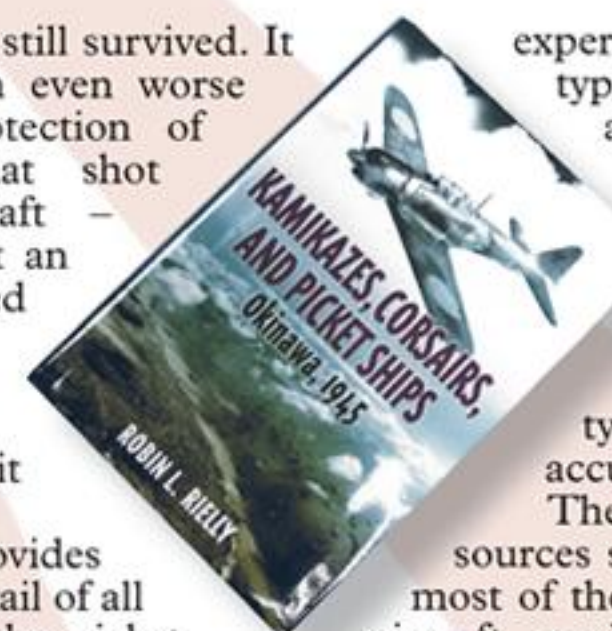
He was fêted there when he visited for the 50th anniversary of the sinking – particularly by families of his former shipmates.

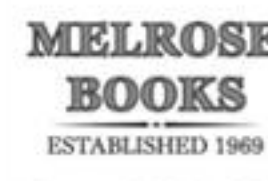
"The visit helped me to tell the story and the guilt I always felt started to go as if I was able to let some light into my mind and feel some sort of relief," he wrote.

In his later years, Norman Walton would become president of the very-belatedly-formed Neptune Association, and wholeheartedly endorsed plans to erect a memorial (he passed away a few months before it was unveiled at the National Memorial Arboretum in 2005).

But he would never be able to answer 'why me?', a question he often asked.

"There is no answer," he wrote



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Fencing novices blooded in Bristol

UPCOMING Navy fencing talent got the chance to show what they can do at a weekend tournament in the West Country.

Four of the 28 teams were from the Senior Service – one in foil, one in sabre and two épée – and the whole event was hosted by reservist unit HMS Flying Fox.

Lt Cdr Dicky Barton, chairman of the RN Amateur Fencing Association, said: "This is the third year we have run this event, and it went very well."

"It gives people who are not necessarily top-level fencers the chance to compete in teams, both RN and civilian."

"It is encouraging fencers rather than getting them to compete."

"People fenced as many matches as they could in the seven hours rather than fenced on until we got a result, which meant all the Navy fencers got at least 12 fights – that's pretty good going."

"We saw lots of new blood in there."

Encouraging young Turks was also an element of the RN knockout competition in November, which attracted a record 20 teams, and it will continue with further events in the coming weeks.

This month sees a similar competition in Birmingham over the weekend of February 14-15, again run by the Navy and organised by Lt Andreana Glendinning (QARNNS) and NN Leanne Parry, who will be looking for similar benefits to those gained at Flying Fox.

Mid-March will see another such event in Portsmouth, organised by Lt Keith Bowers, who has been building up experience as a top-flight referee in recent months.

The Royal Navy fencing championships will be held in Portsmouth on the weekend of May 8-10.

Life savers

NATIONAL pool lifeguard courses will be taking place at HMS Temeraire in Portsmouth throughout 2009.

The course, which leads to a civilian-recognised qualification, is open to military personnel, MOD employees and military dependents and costs £85.

For more information on dates, contact LPT Shortt on 9380 24191.



● HMS Scott's junior rates clearly enjoy wading through water beneath a net on the Collingwood assault course

Continued from page 44

The assault run is not only a test of physical endurance and nerve, but also restraint. The academy staff penalise teams if they hear any swearing during the

challenge.

The officer's set the fastest time, triumphing over the youthful enthusiasm of the junior rates and the experience of the POs and chiefs.

"Rather than settling scores, the competition served to intensify the rivalry and a 'return fixture' is being arranged," said Lt Jim Chapman.

The assault course is available

to any ship wishing to prepare personnel for a command course – or for whole ship training.

Ships wishing to take advantage should contact CPO Neil Upton at Collingwood.

Seven up for Damien

FOR the seventh time in eight years, Royal Marine Capt Damien May proved unbeatable on the court as he lifted the RN squash title.

The green beret and lifesaver with 771 NAS was one of more than 40 competitors who converged on HMS Temeraire in the closing days of 2008 for two days of squash, writes Lt Cdr David Cooke (RNSRA secretary).

Forty matches were played on the first day – and as a result there were many tired legs on Saturday morning, when most competitions were at the semi final stage.

Familiar faces were engaged in renewing acquaintances with old adversaries as the morning progressed, and by the time the finals were being played, most players had played each other in the past.

The ladies' competition – contained on the first day – produced encouraging signs and Surg Lt Kate Roue (Derriford) overcame all others to become the champion, beating Cdr Fiona Fawcett (Chicksands) in the final.

In the men's doubles competition the Naval Air Command duo of Lt Julian Crew (RAF

Shawbury) and POAEA Dave Armstrong (Culdrose) beat all opponents, young and not so young, to take the trophy – one which Armstrong won in 2007 with a different partner.

In the veterans' and vintage events, Lt Cdr Robin Young (Nelson) once again retained his titles against Mr Dave Milford and WO Dave Gibson RM (Excellent) respectively.

His final in the veterans' event was a five-game classic, but Young had for too much guile and cunning for his opponent, who once again missed out on a champion's trophy.

The Men's Plate was won by AEM Tom Springall (Culdrose), who was also the runner-up in the U25 competition, losing out to a very sharp Culdrose comrade, AET Stephen Wallace.

The Classic Plate (losing quarter finalists in the open event) was won by POPT Jason Wallace (Culdrose), who nudged out Kate Roue's brother, Lt James Roue (Culdrose), in a very entertaining final.

The men's final was a re-run of numerous previous encounters between Lt Matt Ellicott

RN (Yeovilton) and current RN champion Capt May.

May has been playing some remarkable squash over the past 12 months and indeed was fourth in a recent Combined Services individual competition at Aldershot.

The first game was packed with some outstanding shots and rallies, but Ellicott's lack of match fitness let him down and when May turned the screw, he forged ahead.

Nevertheless there was plenty for the crowd to applaud as May came home 3 – 0, to not only retain the title of Navy champion but to win it for the seventh time in eight years; his only miss was when Ellicott beat him in the 2006 championships.

Cdr Shaw (chairman of RNSRA) thanked all players for supporting the event, also urging them to maintain fitness and standards for the forthcoming Inter-Services Championships which opens in Aldershot on February 3.

More details about the sport from Lt Cdr Cooke on 9380 23741 or on Navy Star at TEMERAIRE.RNSO4

Selectors seek stars of future

ARE you the golfing ace the powers-that-be are looking for?

The RN Golf Association is looking for players of an appropriate standard who could fill a berth in the men's representative squad – guideline handicap is five and below.

The RNGA run an attractive fixture list, culminating in the best players being selected for the annual inter-Service championships in September.

The association is also looking for players who do not yet meet the squad criteria but have the potential to lower their handicap – a development weekend is planned for this group at Southwick Park on the weekend of March 28-29, open to all serving single-figure golfers.

Attendees will be responsible for arranging accommodation but sports travel will be authorised.

Anyone interested in the above should contact Cdr G Skinnis, secretary RNGA on 9380 27880 or 023 9272 7880, or email (internal) Temeraire.rns06@secgolfws@a.dii.mod.uk

Units scrap at Collingwood

THE Royal Navy inter-unit Boxing Cup will take place at HMS Collingwood SARC on Wednesday February 11, starting at 7.30pm.

There will be free entry to all military personnel with an identity card, and for all civilians wishing to attend tickets will cost £5.

For further information contact POPT Brocklesby on 01329 332389 or LPT Edwards on 01329 332625.

Doors will open at 6.30pm.

Ex-pugilists plan annual reunion

The RN RM Ex Boxers Association will be holding their annual re-union at Portsmouth on the weekend of March 27-28.

A dinner boxing show between the RN and Dorset has been arranged at South Parade Pier on the Friday, followed by visits to various events and a social evening at HMS Excellent on the Saturday evening.

Further information can be obtained from LPT Green at HMS Nelson, tel 9380 25749, or Alan Dolman on 02392 483388.



● Global reach: Members of the ship's company of HMS Portland stage a volleyball tournament on the frigate's flight deck whilst at sea in the Gulf of Oman. Being the Navy, this was not a spot of relaxation; the winners of a hard-fought inter-mess competition were the Royal Marines of Fleet Patrol Group RM

Picture: LA(Phot) Alex Cave



No bull, Argyll is ready for Taurus

MOST people vow to get fit post-Christmas after all that turkey and pudding.

Not so the ship's company of HMS Argyll, who were being whipped into shape before the festive season.

The frigate is about to escort the Taurus 09 task force half-way around the world and with that major deployment in mind, the ship spent the final weeks of 2008 undergoing some maintenance.

And that gave newly-arrived clubz LPT Jim Cusick (an ex-Royal) plenty of time to arrange some physical activities.

One in three of the ship's company took part in a seven-a-side football contest (a combined team from the wardroom and Petty Officers' messes triumphed without conceding a goal).

The Wyvern Centre squash courts have been well used, with an inaugural squash ladder encouraging sailors of all standards to pick up a racket and have a go.

Rugby training has started under the eyes of RN rugby sports rehabilitator, Lt Mike Murphy, while five-a-side football can easily become twice that due to the numbers wanting to unwind after a day's work.

It is not just the traditional team sports which are thriving: 'expeditions' to Plymouth's dry ski slope and paintballing centres have also been popular (if bruising) events.

In addition to all this, twice-weekly fitness tests have been run to provide everyone with the opportunity to stay in date and maintain a suitable standard.

"It has been difficult to keep the ship's company in date for the RN fitness test thanks to our extremely-busy programme – Argyll was activated as Fleet Ready Escort twice in September, plus a further month at sea immediately afterwards," said the frigate's EWO, WO 'Trev' Trevathan.

"The importance of fitness on team spirit cannot be underestimated."

His boss, CO Cdr Peter Olive, agrees: "In my last job, which was in a 'joint environment', I was struck by how much the other Services – particularly our land brethren – see physical training as a core activity, just as important as weapon training or other professional development.

"While our sea-going lifestyle does not always make this possible, this approach is one I'm keen to emulate in Argyll wherever feasible."

A further boost to ship's sport came from engineering services company Mitie which is sponsoring Argyll's rugby team. Mark O'Grady, father of the ship's ET (ME) Tom O'Grady, presented the squad with their new apparel.

Try Thai...

THAI boxing classes are being held weekly in Portsmouth.

A civilian instructor will run classes on Tuesday evenings from 1700-1900 in the gym at HMS Nelson, and standards will range from beginners to top level.

Contact POPT Sloan on 9380 28667 for details on keeping fit while having fun.



● Lt Cdr Penny Clark back in more familiar maritime surroundings

Olympic sailor back in harness

OLYMPIC yachtswoman Lt Cdr Penny Clark found herself back in more familiar maritime surroundings when she visited the London International Boat Show.

The Marine Engineer Officer gave a presentation at the show about her achievements and the support given by the Royal Navy as she pursues her dream – she already has a European Championship bronze medal and finished tenth in Beijing, and is now setting her sights on London 2012 in the 470 class.

But she also took the time to grab a pair of white overalls and get back into the machinery space of a 'Pusser's grey' with some of the stokers from HMS Westminster, the Royal Navy's representative at the show.



Mixed results for Red Rose frigate

CLUBZ LPT Daz Hoare continues to keep the men and women of HMS Lancaster on their toes with a string of sporting engagements whenever the frigate puts into port in the Gulf – with mixed results.

The latest city to host the Red Rose sportsmen was Abu Dhabi and a 14-a-side (yes, you read correctly – family and work commitments meant both sides stepped out one player short) rugby union clash kicked off the sporting fixtures.

The first 15 minutes were all Lancaster with some great moves and pressure from the forwards; on more than one occasion the sailors came close to touching over.

A missed penalty by Lancaster spurred Abu Dhabi into action; the locals touched down twice before the break to take a 10-0 lead at half-time.

The second period also started brightly, but with no subs the Red Rosers visibly tired and Abu Dhabi notched up another 22 points without replay to claim a 32-0 victory.

Barely recovered from their rugby exploits, the sailors were on the football pitch for a clash with Abu Dhabi Expats on a rather lumpy pitch which made the ball difficult to control...

...Unless you're ET (ME) Alexander, who bagged a hat-trick during a 7-3 trouncing of the locals.

The expatriates conceded three goals in a four-goal blitz in the final ten minutes.

The last match came in the sumptuous grounds of the magnificent Emirates Palace Hotel (reputedly the most luxurious hotel on the planet...).

It takes 1,600 staff to run the huge waterfront complex – more than enough people to draw upon for a football contest.

In fact, the Emirates Palace mustered enough teams for a round-robin tournament.

Lancaster A proved the stronger of the two sides put out by the ship, drawing 0-0 and 3-3.

Lancaster B lost both their encounters, 5-2 and 2-0.

"Over the three days, the teams did very well indeed," said Daz.

"The rugby team has some hot prospects and we're looking forward to our next game against Bahrain."

Forthcoming attractions

SPORTING fixtures and competitions involving RN teams coming up in the next few months include:

- March 4: RN v RAF football (RAF Uxbridge)
- March 4-6: Inter-Services netball (HMS Nelson gym)
- March 11: RN v Army football (Fratton Park)
- March 12: MOD volleyball championships (HMS Nelson gym)
- May 2: Army v RN rugby (Twickenham)
- May 11-15: Windsor Castle Royal Tattoo (Windsor)
- June 6: RN Field Gun competition (MWS Collingwood)



Onside with Capt Paul Cunningham, RNFA

Returning to the team were AET Tom Ardley, LPT Dave Berry, Mne Dan Boere and C/Sgt Richie Hope, but once again we shipped a goal after only four minutes.

Despite enjoying the majority of the possession, the equaliser didn't come until the 69th minute from man of the match LAET Russ Hardwell – other good chances were squandered.

The seniors then enjoyed an emphatic 5-0 win against the English Fire Service with goals from Cpl Adam Fowler just before half time, and LPT Steve Young after an hour. Three goals in the last ten minutes from AET Ardley (a fantastic volley from 30 yards into the top corner) and LAET Russ Hardwell (twice – one straight from a corner) put the icing on the cake after a strong performance which got better as the game progressed.

Lastly, the RN beat Sussex County FA 2-1 through first-half goals from LPT Steve Young and AET Jamie Thirkle. A goal for Sussex half-way through the second period set up an exciting

climax but some good defending, not least by LET ME Craig Horsman, returning to the Senior team after a lengthy spell at sea.

LPT Matt Shortt put in a fine performance in goal, including two exceptional finger-tip saves. Cpl Fowler was our man of the match for the second consecutive game. Another very encouraging performance from the Navy Senior team who are building their confidence level – three games in a row undefeated.

The U18s lost 3-1 to Middlesex in their first match of the season. AET Musmeci (Sultan) had put the RN ahead after quarter of an hour but a strong county side hit back with three in the second half.

Despite the scoreline there were encouraging signs of a strong Navy squad, and debuts for ET Davidson (Sultan) and Sea Spec Hoyland (Collingwood).

The young side also lost 3-1 against a very well-organised Sussex County team, but again there were some encouraging performances.

The RN took a deserved lead

after 12 minutes and could easily have been further ahead going into the interval.

Fourteen efforts on goal by half time was impressive but a 1-0 scoreline gave Sussex hope.

Unfortunately the Navy's missed chances and the stamina levels of the opposition took its toll and our solid defence was broken in the 60th minute.

From then on the game was end-to-end and was great for the spectators, with Sussex eventually breaking through to win the match late on.

Hopefully the RN youngsters will keep their heads high and the squad is certainly growing stronger.

Looking ahead to next month, please put a marker in your diaries for the RNFA's annual blue riband match.

This year's home Inter-Service game is on Wednesday March 11, kick off at 7.30pm. The match is due to be played at Fratton Park against the Army and entry is free.

Please come along to support the Navy for what is our biggest match of the season, where we are honoured that Lord Triesman, the Chairman of the FA, will be our guest of honour.

Our website is currently being overhauled. During this time if you require any information please call the RNFA office on 02392 723974.

The success of Cole power

THE beaming smile says it all. This is LPT Sean Cole holding aloft a plaque after almost snatching the title at the World Powerlifting Championships.

The club swinger headed to Evansville, Indiana, to compete against the best lifters from more than a dozen nations during the day-long contest organised by the World Drug Free Powerlifting Association.

After qualifying at the British Nationals with a total lift of 490kg, Sean qualified to represent England in Indiana – the second time that the leading hand has represented his country in the 67.5kg class.

This time around, Sean broke his own military world record with a 165kg squat, 120kg bench press and a 240kg dead lift giving him

a total of 525kg.

That stunning performance was knocked into second place... but at least it was a teammate who overtook him, Briton Stuart Ford, who also broke the world record with an outstanding total of 570kg.

The two men's outstanding achievements helped to propel the England team to second place overall.

Now back in Blighty, Sean's gearing up to defend his 2008 national title. The first round of qualifications takes place in Sunbury on February 28.

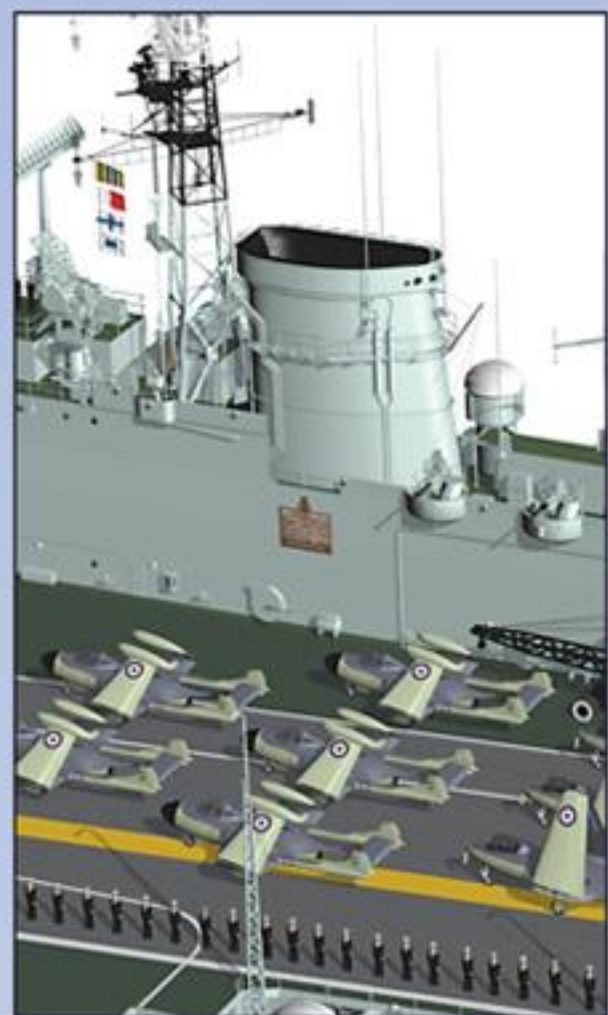
For more information on the growing sport of RN/RM Powerlifting, contact Lt Cdr Simon Wynn (96218 5220) or Sean Cole (94229 4723).



Next month



SPORT



Concluding part of our stunning Ark Royal cutaway poster



Daring arrives at new home – pictures



Wot no water? – Our man in Chad

Plus

(Bayo)net gains – with Largs Bay in the Falklands

And

Send a gunboat – Marines welcome souped-up raiding craft

Adventurous spirit



THIS, believe it or not, is the Lake District, the rocky slopes of Bowfell to be precise.

And these are naughty monkeys making their way towards the summit of the 3,000ft peak.

Exercise Naughty Monkey was one of a clutch of **adventurous training** initiatives seized by Royal Navy and Royal Marines personnel.

The Monkeys – aka WE System Engineer and Management Course No.83 and no, we've no idea why they earned that nickname – took a break following an intensive period of written and oral examinations at HMS Collingwood.

Lt Alan Ainsworth on the course staff guided the intrepid engineers on a series of mountain walks over Bowfell, the Crinkle Crags, Striding Edge, Easy Gully (don't be fooled by the name...) and Pavey Ark.

As you would expect with the Lakes, the weather wasn't always clement, but the first day's hiking up Crinkle Crags offered stunning vistas – made all the more impressive by a light sprinkling of snow.

The following day, in strengthening north-westerly winds, the group was forced to retreat from High Spying How at the start of Striding Edge (pictured below).

"While the photographs we took show the group bearing smiles, we were certainly taking people out of their comfort zones," said Alan.

"What the pictures don't show of course is the winds gusting at more than 50mph across the ridge

"I had no intention of adding to the statistics of deaths recorded due to people being blown off it, so I took the group down for some lower level walking though Grisedale and into Patterdale" (where, we're led to believe,

there's a local hostelry – Ed).

The 2,300ft Pavey Ark provided good shelter from the worst of the wind on the final day, with Easy Gully providing its own obstacles and demanding co-operation among the group members and individual mettle in an environment of increased height and exposure.

"After building up their confidence on steep ground over the previous days, the course members continued to impress with their levels of commitment and were rewarded with a challenging day during which we experienced all weathers," said Alan.

And all this for £15 (although the bad weather was free). Dosh from RN/RM Sports Lottery and the AT fund kept costs for the engineers to a minimum.

Meanwhile in Wales... Nineteen senior and junior rates from HMS Tireless descended on the outdoor training centre at Tal-y-Bont for some, er, outdoor training.

The aim was to prepare the various submariners for impending leadership courses.

A series of practical tasks and demanding physical challenges were laid on around the Welsh hills.

"Although the unique challenges posed by life on board a submarine require us to work together as a close-knit team, taking the group to Wales allowed us to give them very different problems to solve,"

said group leader Lt Dave Burrell.

Not to be outdone, fellow Devonport sailors headed down the A32 to test their mettle on the assault course at the RN Leadership Academy in HMS Collingwood.

With their ship HMS Scott undergoing a lengthy overhaul in Portsmouth Naval Base, eighteen ship's company, led by CO Cdr Andy Swain, decided some AT was the order of the day.

Officers should, of course, lead by example. And they did. The wardroom were first off down the course.

Continued on page 42



THE BABCOCK TROPHY

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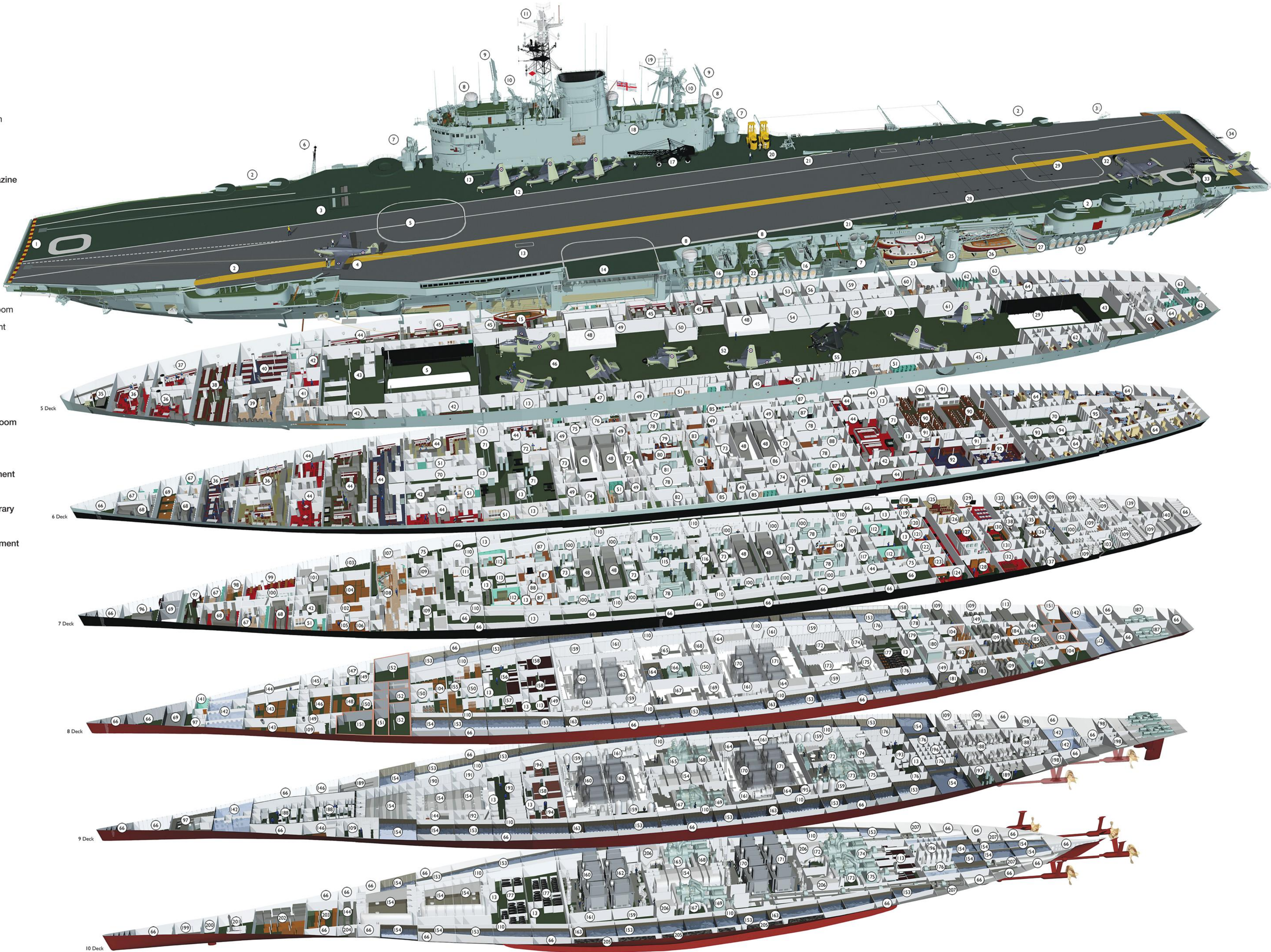
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This is a spacer page to allow the following cutaways to appear correctly, just click on to the next page



- 1 Bow parking chocks
- 2 4.5in twin barrel mountings
- 3 Starboard steam catapult positioner
- 4 Seahawk on port steam catapult
- 5 Forward aircraft lift
- 6 V/HF D/F W/T mast (lowered)
- 7 High angle director control tower
- 8 Control range blind fire director
- 9 982 air search radar
- 10 983 height-finding radar
- 11 Forward lattice mast
- 12 Seahawks in parking area
- 13 Bomb lift
- 14 Deck edge lift
- 15 32ft motor cutter (outboard)
- 16 40mm six-barrel Bofors
- 17 Jumbo crane
- 18 40mm single Bofors
- 19 After tripod mast
- 20 Fork lift trucks
- 21 Crash barrier
- 22 Mirror angle landing site
- 23 36ft motor pinnace
- 24 27ft whaler
- 25 7.5 ton boat crane
- 26 35ft ms motor boat
- 27 16ft dingy
- 28 Aircraft arrester wires
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- 30 Life rafts
- 31 H/F D/F W/T mast (lowered)
- 32 Sea Venom aircraft
- 33 Gannet ASW1
- 34 40mm twin-barrel Bofors
- 35 Sailmakers' shop
- 36 POs' mess
- 37 CPOs' mess
- 38 CPOs' dining hall
- 39 Senior rates' galley and servery
- 40 POs' dining hall
- 41 Food preparation
- 42 Junior rates' kit locker flat
- 43 Torpedo body room
- 44 Junior rates' mess
- 45 Air ratings' mess
- 46 X bay hangar
- 47 Deck edge lift machinery
- 48 Boiler uptakes
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- 50 Hangar issue centre
- 51 Junior rates' bathroom
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- 53 Light electric workshop
- 54 Parachute maintenance room
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- 56 Battery charging room
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- 58 Dinghy maintenance room
- 59 Gun room
- 60 Officers' galley
- 61 Ready use small arms magazine
- 62 Officers' heads
- 63 Officers' bathroom
- 64 Officers' cabins
- 65 Midshipmen's study
- 66 Watertight compartment
- 67 POs' bathroom
- 68 Senior rates' kit locker flat
- 69 Cable locker
- 70 Auxiliary lift compartment
- 71 Bomb transfer space
- 72 Forward steering position
- 73 Fan space
- 74 Aviation oilstore
- 75 Air conditioning machinery
- 76 A and B machinery control room
- 77 Heavy electrical workshop
- 78 Diesel generator compartment
- 79 Cryptographic offices
- 80 Lower receiving room
- 81 Lower transmitting room
- 82 Brig
- 83 Main switchboard
- 84 HQ1
- 85 Air ratings' bathroom
- 86 Soot plant
- 87 L.P. room
- 88 Gyro compass room
- 89 X and Y machinery control room
- 90 Wardroom
- 91 Pantry
- 92 Wardroom ante-room
- 93 Awning store
- 94 Electrical spare gear store
- 95 Emergency pump compartment
- 96 Spare anchor gear store
- 97 Paint store
- 98 Frying oil store
- 99 School/lecture room and library
- 100 Electrical breaker room
- 101 Sonobuoy store
- 102 Printing room
- 103 Cooling machinery compartment
- 104 Provisions store
- 105 Photo office
- 106 Developing room



- 107 Issue room
- 108 Laundry
- 109 Naval store
- 110 Airspace
- 111 Clothing issue room
- 112 Computer room
- 113 Bofors magazine
- 114 HQ2
- 115 Main machinery workshop
- 116 Engineers' fitting shop
- 117 Power room
- 118 Engineers' office
- 119 Commander (Engineering) office
- 120 Commander's office
- 121 Gunnery office
- 122 Air office
- 123 Electrical office
- 124 Captain's office
- 125 Church
- 126 Vestry
- 127 Pay office
- 128 Chart and intelligence room
- 129 Air training and lecture room
- 130 Naval office
- 131 Intelligence office
- 132 Intelligence room
- 133 Supply office
- 134 Marine office
- 135 Sonobuoy trainer office
- 136 Buzz and voice trainer room
- 137 Squadron offices
- 138 Technical assistant office
- 139 Officers' baggage store
- 140 Loan clothing store
- 141 ASDIC office
- 142 Fresh water tank
- 143 Flour store
- 144 Gunners' armament store
- 145 Torpedo gyro adjusting room
- 146 Anteen store
- 147 Dope store
- 148 Geners mess store
- 149 Salvage pump room
- 150 AVCAT control room
- 151 Cool room
- 152 Cold room
- 153 Feed fuel oil tank
- 154 AVCAT tank
- 155 Clothing store
- 156 Pyrotechnics magazine
- 157 RP shellhead room
- 158 Small arms magazine
- 159 Evaporator room
- 160 A boiler room
- 161 Turbo-generator compartment
- 162 B boiler room
- 163 Sludge tank
- 164 Reserve feed tank
- 165 B engine room
- 166 Boiler party store
- 167 A engine room
- 168 B gearing room
- 169 A gearing room
- 170 X boiler room
- 171 Y boiler room
- 172 Y engine room
- 173 X engine room
- 174 Y gearing room
- 175 X gearing room
- 176 Plumbers block compartment
- 177 Bomb room
- 178 Marines' great coat store
- 179 Implement store
- 180 AVGAS control room
- 181 Aircraft armament store
- 182 Wardroom store
- 183 Wardroom wine store
- 184 Admiral's store
- 185 Spirit room
- 186 Marines' store
- 187 Steering gear compartment
- 188 4.5in magazine
- 189 Spare armature store
- 190 Air compressor compartment
- 191 Hydraulic pump room
- 192 Detonator locker compartment
- 193 Rocket motor magazine
- 194 Rocket magazine
- 195 Boiler rundown tank
- 196 AVGAS tank
- 197 AVCAT transfer pump room
- 198 Palm plate compartments
- 199 Inflammable store
- 200 ASDIC compartment
- 201 Bow rudder compartment
- 202 Commissioned airmen's store
- 203 Warhead room
- 204 Argolene store
- 205 Pig iron ballast
- 206 Overflow feed tank
- 207 Gland compartment

inside HMS ARK ROYAL IV

IN THE annals of the post-war Royal Navy the name of one ship resonated – and continues to resonate – louder than any other.

Perhaps it was the name she inherited from her forebear, scourge of the Nazis. Perhaps it was her enduring and enduring patron. Perhaps it was the iconic image of the schoolboy wandering down a Merseyside street, the gleaming white Ark and the gantries of Cammell Laird towering over him. Perhaps it was a television documentary series – and a flag-waving hit single to accompany it. Perhaps it was the spirit and soul of the thousands of men.

Whatever, HMS Ark Royal IV is the ship which defines the Royal Navy of the Cold War era.

It is a story which begins not on Merseyside, nor even by the sea, but among those dark Satanic mills and cobbled streets, soot-blackened terraced houses and imposing public monuments to the industrial revolution.

The people of Leeds 'adopted' Ark Royal III barely a week before she was sunk in November 1941. The loss spurred them on to raise more than £9m – roughly £300m today. Their generosity ensured the name Ark Royal would live on.

And so it was that Princess Marina, the Duchess of Kent, 'laid the keel' on May 11 1943 (eight days after shipwrights had actually begun work...) and hull number

1119 began to take shape.

1119 would grow for the next seven years. With the veil of wartime secrecy lifted she would assume her true name.

It was not Princess Marina but Queen Elizabeth – in years to come the Queen Mother – who performed the honours on a spring day in Birkenhead in 1950. More than 50,000 people watched the carrier enter the water for the first time on May 3.

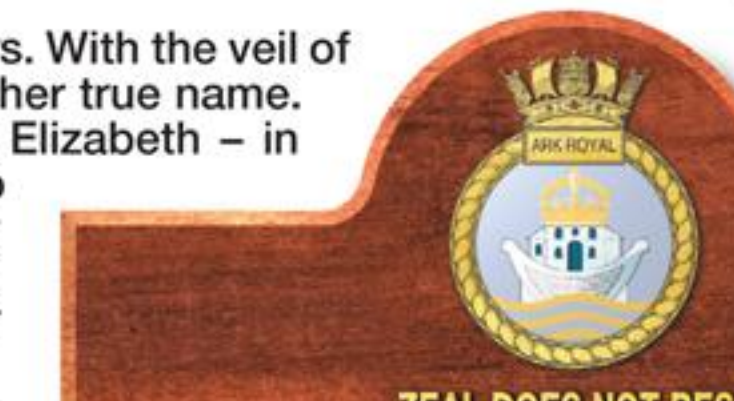
It would be four more years before she put to sea, however, and February 1955 before she was formally commissioned.

Our illustration depicts Ark in the latter end of that first commission, during which time she underwent a few tweaks: the six-barrel Bofors gun in front of the island was removed, as was the HADT on the port forward gallery. A mirror landing sight sponson was added on the port side abait the deck edge lift.

At this stage she did not sport the famous RO9 pennant number on the side of her island, or the code R on the flight deck – these were introduced by the 2nd commission.

A sizeable proportion of her brief first commission was spent in the Mediterranean, partly conducting trials and tests, partly as a showpiece for the RN and NATO.

Her second commission, 1956-58, was only slightly longer than her first, but it did see a magical tour of the USA, including a first visit to New York, berthed a stone's throw from the legendary liner Queen Mary.



The days of the liner were numbered thanks to the jet age – and the revolution in air power in the 1950s. Sea Hawks and Sea Venoms gave way to Scimitars and Sea Vixens.

The 60s was a decade of huge social, economic, political and technological change – and many, if not all, these factors impacted on Ark's third, fourth and fifth commissions.

Between the tail end of 1959 and October 1966, the carrier was "run very hard" by a succession of exercises, marathon deployments east of Suez and, increasingly, dealing with the end of empire.

In the early spring of 1966, Ark was dispatched to east Africa to lead the newly-formed Beira patrol, enforcing sanctions against Rhodesia (today Zimbabwe) which had illegally declared

its independence. The decision to commit Ark came just days after Whitehall pulled the plug on the future carrier programme, deciding it didn't need seaborne air power...

For the time being, it certainly did, however. Between 1967 and 1970, £32m (roughly £400m today) was ploughed into Ark ahead of her sixth and final commission.

That commission would be her longest and most (in)famous. A dozen Buccaneers were her punch, two-seat Phantoms her shield, aided by a quartet of Gannets on airborne early-warning duties. Seven Sea Kings searched for enemy submarines, and one Wessex was on stand-by for Search and Rescue duties.

The commission began in controversial fashion: having shadowed the rarer very closely, a Soviet Koltin-class destroyer got too close and clipped the carrier. Two Russian sailors died in the collision. Their government blamed the RN. Questions were asked in Westminster. A Board of Inquiry convened. Ark's captain was cleared;

the Red Navy was at fault (as it admitted privately...).

After infamy, eventually came fame... thanks (a little) to the RAF. When the Air Force turned down a new-style of documentary series – a 'fly-on-the-wall' programme – the RN said 'yes' and invited a four-strong BBC team aboard to cover Ark's US deployment.

The result was *Sailor*, first aired in August 1976. Aided by a No.1 theme tune by Rod Stewart, a dramatic high-seas rescue, a string of characters and a puppet who sailed rather close to the wind, the programme set the benchmark for every documentary about the military for the next three decades.

But TV star or not, it could not save HMS Ark Royal. In February 1977, the government announced the carrier would be out of service before the end of 1978. Ark's ship's company had hoped she would remain in service until her successor HMS Invincible (ironically launched 27 years to the day) joined the Fleet.

But it was not to be, but at least Ark Royal went out with a bang, not a whimper.

She took pride of place at the Silver Jubilee Fleet Review on June 27 (her final visit to Portsmouth, as it turned out), hosting the Queen, Duke of Edinburgh, then Prime Minister Jim Callaghan and every available commanding officer in the Fleet.

She exercised with NATO, with the French, she spent four months in the Americas, exercised some more with NATO, hosted the Queen Mother for the final time, paid a farewell visit to Gibraltar – and to Malta, too, where 10,000 people waited to see her – and witnessed the very last fixed-wing aircraft (Gannet 044 of 849 Naval Air Squadron B Flight) to land on her hallowed flight deck.

The fast jets and propeller-driven aircraft departed – a Phantom held the distinction of being the last aircraft catapulted from Ark – before the ship entered Devonport for the final time on December 4 1978, trailing a 450ft decommissioning pennant.

There were plans to save her – notably as a floating museum on the Thames at Greenwich – but in the end she went for scrap, towed out of Plymouth Sound in September 1980.

Over the next four years, breakers at Cairnryan, near Stranraer, tore her apart.

Some of her remains. An anchor at Yeovilton. The admiral's cabin in a Scottish hotel. The memories live on. And so too the name.

Class: Audacious-class Fleet carrier
Pennant number: R09
Builder: Cammell Laird, Birkenhead
Motto: Zeal does not rest
Sponsor: Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth (the future Queen Mother)
Laid down: May 3, 1943
Launched: May 3, 1950
Commissioned: February 25, 1955
Decommissioned: February 14, 1979
Scrapped: Cairnryan, Scotland, 1980-84
Displacement: 43,340 tons (53,340 tons fully loaded)
Length: 808 ft
Beam: 158 ft
Draught: 36 ft
Speed: in excess of 30 knots
Complement: 1,632 to 1,745 ship's company; 2,295 to 2,345 with embarked squadrons. Average age of ship's company: 21
Galleys: Six choices of meal provided at meal times in two dining halls. Chefs used 3,600 eggs, 1½ tons of meat, seven tons of potatoes daily. They baked 6,000 rolls and 300 loaves each day
Propulsion: 8 x Admiralty drum-type boilers working at 400 lb per square inch pressure; Parsons geared turbines, four shafts producing 152,000 shaft horsepower
Cost: £21,428,000 (c. £400m today)
Armament: 8 x twin 4.5in guns, 5 x sextuple 40mm Bofors anti-aircraft guns, 2 x twin 40mm Bofors, 7 x single 40mm Bofors, 4 x 3 pdr
Aircraft (First commission): c.50 including Hawker Sea Hawk, Fairey Gannet, Douglas Skyraider, De Havilland Sea Venom, Westland Dragonfly, Westland Whirlwind
Some random facts: The electricity generators produced 9 Megawatts of power (the next-generation carriers can produce 108MW – enough electricity to power Swindon); the osmosis plants produced 1,000 tons of water every day

